



TO THE LAW AND THE TESTIMONY

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The book that will suit you
or, a word for every one

Section 6





THE
BOOK
THAT WILL SUIT YOU,
OR,
A WORD FOR EVERY ONE.

BY THE REV. JAMES SMITH,
Author of "The Believer's Daily Remembrancer," &c.

"Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth."—
Eccles. xi. 2.

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PREFACE.

THIS book is intended to lay on the table in the drawing-room, parlour, hall, kitchen, or cottage ; that the Visitor who is waiting for an interview, or the Servant who is waiting for a message, or the Neighbour who comes in to sit down for a few minutes, may take it up and read a portion ; hoping that the Holy Spirit will make it a blessing. It is also suitable as a present to a relative, friend, servant, or neighbour ; and contains remarks adapted to every class of character, and suitable to almost every circumstance in life.

The remarks are plain and pointed, and are conveyed in language the meaning of which cannot be mistaken. The writer's only design is to do good, to benefit every class of his fellow-men, and glorify his God for His rich, free, and sovereign grace. It is hoped that nothing will be found in this book which can justly displease any true Christians ; it is not the book of a party, or particularly suited to one section of the church of Christ more than another.

Reader, would you desire benefit from this book? If so, look up and pray for the presence, power, and teaching of the Holy Spirit; who alone can render it a blessing to thy soul. If you obtain a blessing by its perusal, circulate it; if you have the means, *give* a few copies away where it is likely to be of use; but if you cannot afford to do this, *lend* your own copy, praying the Lord to make it a blessing. Do not lock it up in the chest, or book-case; but lay it where it is likely to attract attention and be read;—who can tell what the Lord may do by such a feeble instrument? May He condescend to bless it to every reader; and may each one who derives benefit from it, remember to pray for the Author at our heavenly Father's throne.

JAMES SMITH

*New Park Street,
Southwark, London.*

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THE TESTIMONY OF GOD.

"I came to you declaring the testimony of God." 1 Cor. ii. 1.

THE gospel is not a cunningly devised fable, but the very word of God; it is a divine testimony; a message from Jehovah to man. It comes direct from heaven, and is addressed to us in love. By the gospel, God testifies to us, that we are totally and entirely lost by nature; that there is neither help nor hope for us but in the Lord Jesus Christ; but that in Him is all we need, or our circumstances require. He has pardon for all sin; a righteousness to justify the ungodly; peace for the troubled conscience; life for the dying soul; holiness for the impure and filthy; strength for the weak and languishing; in a word, a full salvation for the lost and perishing. He possesses all the wealth of God. He is able to make the foolish, wise; the guilty, just; the filthy, clean; the miserable, happy; the weak, strong; the diseased, healthy; the carnal, spiritual; and the slaves of Satan, the children of God. Christ, is all that God can give. Christ,

has all that a sinner can want. Having Christ, we can want no more ; and, if we are taught by the Holy Spirit, we can be satisfied with no less.

The gospel testifies that we are welcome to all that the fulness of Christ contains, without money and without price. God has set no price upon gospel blessings, because they are invaluable ; He has prescribed no conditions, but given a universal welcome. His words are, " Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. xxii. 17.) And the testimony declares, that believing ; Christ, and all He has, becomes ours. We receive Him. We are entitled to all He has. We are interested in all He has done His work is reckoned ours, for our justification ; it is received as ours, to be the foundation of our hope ; and it is pleaded as ours, and forms a prevailing plea with God. It becomes our joy, our boast, and our song in the house of our pilgrimage.

The Lord testifies, that true faith always produces penitence, and leads to holiness ; the believing heart and the weeping eye go together. If we really believe, we daily repent ; we cannot repent of sin, except we believe in Jesus ; and we do not believe in Jesus, except we repent of sin. Faith produces godly sorrow, and godly sorrow leads to holiness of life. The stronger our faith, the deeper our penitence ; and the deeper our repentance, the holier our life. Never be

satisfied with faith without a broken heart ; nor fancy, that the heart is broken, except sin is bitter ; and if sin is bitter to the soul, it will be sure to be forsaken. Faith and holiness are indisputable evidences of a title to heaven. Faith purifies the heart, and the heart reforms the life.

You have heard the testimony of God, you have read it ; but do you believe it ? Do you perceive its great importance, and receive it into your heart, as a message of love coming direct from God to you ? Do you heartily approve of it ? Do you act upon it ? If you reject the testimony, you treat God with contempt. If you deny the testimony, you give God the lie. If you postpone the consideration of it, you manifest the greatest folly. If you receive the testimony, you set to your seal that God is true. The testimony being sent, man is brought to the test. The testimony being rejected, the doom of man is sealed. Once more the testimony is placed before your eye, and presented to your heart ; it is to be received or rejected ? **DECIDE !**

“ Sinner, attend, attend, I pray,
Unto the Gospel word ;
Regard your visitation day,
And entertain the Lord
‘ Give me thy heart,’ the Saviour cries,
Justly He doth it claim ;
Oh, do not then, His call despise,
But give it to the Lamb.”

THE PROPOSAL AND PROMISE.

“ Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart ; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” Matt. xi. 29.

THE yoke is the symbol of subjection and obedience. The Jews wore the yoke of Moses ; and we by nature wear the yoke of Satan and of sin. We are all under a yoke, but Jesus proposes that we change masters, “ Take,” He says, “ my yoke upon you.” Be my disciples, take your place at my feet, and learn of me. I will teach you doctrines, such as are suited to your state, and calculated to purify, elevate, and fill you with joy and peace. I will teach you to believe to the saving of the soul. I will instruct you to do the will of God from the heart. I will teach you to suffer with patience, fortitude, and hope. I will shew you how to die in peace, and with a blissful assurance of immortality. Be my servants, admit my authority, receive my word, aim to please me. “ I am meek and lowly of heart.” I am not austere or unfeeling ; but full of sympathy and love. I condescend to the lowest, I cast out none. Come, learn my char-

acter ; come, prove my profession ' come, try my service.

"Ye shall find rest unto your souls." There is no rest in the world. There is no repose in the service of sin. There is no peace to the sinner while distant from Jesus. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." But Jesus promises peace, and he gives rest to every one that takes and wears his yoke. Such find rest from those anxious, perplexing, and troublesome thoughts, which others are tried with, and cannot conquer ; such as, "Is there a God ? What is his character ? What is eternity ? Can I be saved ? How can I be accepted of God ?" The disciples of Jesus know the Father ; they rejoice in His character ; they anticipate eternity as an infinite duration of pleasure and joy ; they know the way of salvation, and walk in it ; and they feel the comfort of being accepted of God in the Beloved. They rest on the revelation God has given. They rest in the knowledge and enjoyment of truth. They rest by faith, and rejoice in hope.

They find rest from guilty fears, which arise and revel in the breasts of others. They look to the blood of Jesus, and obtain pardon ; they trust in the word of promise, and feel safe ; they draw near to God and enjoy fellowship ; and "per

fect love casteth out fear." They rest from burdensome services, for what was once a toil, becomes a pleasure ; what was felt to be a servant's duty, is enjoyed as the privilege of a beloved child. The very precepts seem to change their character, and only require what the soul approves, desires, and ardently longs to perform. The Sabbath of the Lord is a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honorable ; a day of rest and sweet satisfaction. They find rest for the affections, on a worthy, suitable, and proper object ; God in Christ is all they can desire or enjoy ; and when the affections are fixed upon Him, they are satisfied, delighted, and fully employed. They find repose for their hopes ; they may expect until expectation can stretch no further, and yet there is more to be possessed and realized. They feel, that beneath the anchor of their hope there is a rock which will hold it firm for ever, and secure it amidst all the storms and tempests of this mortal life. They look through the glass of the word, and see stretched before them, the promised land, on which the sun of righteousness never sets, in which the fruits and flowers, never fade or die ; where the inhabitants never say " I am sick," and whose glory is the perpetual presence of its God.

They find rest from anxious, worldly cares ; the promises and providence of God being engaged for them ; God himself being their Father,

and Jesus, their Advocate, being before the throne, they feel that they can exercise implicit confidence in his care, and kindness ; and they manage their affairs, in faith, looking up to the Lord in prayer, and expecting his sanction and blessing. The thirst for happiness, which is common to man, they find gratified ; and the water which Jesus gives, which is the Holy Spirit, quenches, or rather satisfies this thirst, and they have within them a spring of living water ; so that, as the wise man says, "The good man is satisfied from himself." In a word, they enjoy a general satisfaction of soul ; they have in Jesus all they can want, they receive from Jesus all they need, they enjoy in the presence of Jesus comfort beyond any thing they ever found in the world, and look forward to the future, rejoicing that the present is the worst state they will ever be in, for before them all is bright and glorious.

Well, reader, what say you to the Saviour's proposal ? Will you accept it ? How will you treat the meek and lowly Saviour ? He only seeks your welfare and your happiness. Will you try his yoke ? Refuse, and you will have an eternity to repent of it, but repentance will be useless, and without relief.

A MISTAKE CORRECTED.

"It is time to seek the Lord."—Hosea x. 12.

It is generally admitted, that the Lord should be sought ; but it is as generally considered that it should be at some future period. Any time but the present, is the general idea. But this is a mistake, a gross mistake, a very dangerous mistake ; for the opposite is the fact, and no time is like the present. The Lord should be sought by you, whose eye is now passing over this page. Consider He is the author of your being—the source of happiness—the centre of holiness—the giver of grace—and the judge of all. You are at a distance from Him ; you are in a state of estrangement ; but it is quite possible for you to find Him. He is not far from you. He has revealed himself in Jesus. You may find Him on the throne of grace. You will be admitted into his presence, if you go in the name, and plead the blood of Jesus. But seeking requires attention ; it must be in faith, by prayer, with diligence. Unless you think, you will not feel ; unless you feel, you will not desire ; unless you desire, you will not seek. Without faith you will not find Him, for "he that cometh to God,

must believe that He is; and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

It is time to seek the Lord, for none can seek Him too early. Youth has the greatest encouragement, for to such he says, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me." The young meet with the fewest obstacles. Many have delayed too long; the foolish virgins did; and multitudes, on their death-beds, have confessed and deplored this. Therefore, seek the Lord *now, at once*; before "the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, wherein ye shall say, I have no pleasure in them." Seek now, while God invites you—while Jesus calls you—while ministers exhort and warn you—while the Spirit is promised you—and while space for repentance is given you. Soon the door may be shut. Soon the Lord may swear, "They shall not enter into my rest." Soon the Eternal may say, "Let him alone. 'Israel would none of me, so I gave them up.'"

Do you ask why we are so earnest with you, so anxious for you? Because we wish you to be wise—to be safe—to be holy—to be honourable—to be happy: and this can never be the case, unless you "seek the Lord." We consider God's right. He has a right to your heart, your love, and your service; but these he will not have, except you "seek the Lord." We are acquainted with your need; you need the blood of Jesus to

pardon you, the Spirit of God to sanctify you, the presence of God to cheer you, and the promises of God to support you; but these you will never enjoy, except you "seek the Lord." We know the enmity, practice, and wicked design of Satan, that he is aiming to secure your damnation; and this he will effect, except you "seek the Lord." We know the influence of the world, and the force of habit; and enter into the meaning of the prophet, "Let the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots; then may they also do good who are *accustomed* to do evil." Therefore, we urge you, at once, to "seek the Lord." We sympathise with you, we feel love to you, we are deeply concerned for your salvation; and, therefore, we plead with you to "seek the Lord." "It is time to seek the Lord," for sickness may seize you; sin may harden you; Satan may blind you; error may deceive you; the world may bewitch you; death may arrest you; or God may give you up. Not one moment beyond the present is secured to you. "*Now* is the accepted time. *Behold*, now is the day of salvation." Therefore, "seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near." Say not, "Go thy way for this time, and when I have a convenient season I will send for thee." No time is like the present. If present impressions are allowed to die away, they may never be revived; if this warning be slighted, another

may not be sent ; if this invitation be rejected, you may be given up to blindness and hardness of heart ; and this testimony may witness against you at the last day.

“SINNER, obey the gospel word,
Haste to the supper of your Lord ;
Be wise to know your gracious day ;
All things are ready, come away.

Ready the Father is to own
And kiss His late-returning son ;
Ready the loving Saviour stands,
And spreads for you his bleeding hands

Ready the Spirit. to impart
His gracious influence to your heart .
T’ apply and witness with the blood,
And seal you of the sons of God.

Ready for you the angels wait,
To triumph in your blest estate ;
Tuning their harps, they long to praise
The wonders of redeeming grace.

Come then, O sinner, to your Lord,
To happiness in Christ restored ;
His proffer’d benefits embrace,
And test the fulness of His grace.”

TRUE WISDOM AND ITS RESULT.

“If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself”—Prov. ix. 12.

THE address of Scripture is frequently *direct*: it comes up to the man and speaks to his face, like Ehud to Eglon, “I have a message from God unto thee.” Or, like Nathan to David, “Thou art the man.” So the passage before us, “*If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself.*” True wisdom cometh down from above, and “is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” It is of the greatest importance; therefore Solomon says, “Get wisdom, get understanding. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.” It may be obtained, and *you* may obtain it; for the Apostle says, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that *giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not*; and *it shall be given him.*” Wisdom is religion, and real religion is true wisdom. The wise man is the holy man; and the sinner is the fool.

Wisdom, consists in admitting God’s authority; in reverencing God’s word; and in aiming to please God in all things. The truly wise man

cordially believes all that God has said, and because God has said it ; he fears, because God threatens ; comes to Jesus, because God invites him ; prays in faith, because God bids him ; rests alone for acceptance on the perfect work of Jesus, because God directs him ; expects the greatest blessings, because God promises them ; and obeys the precepts of the word, because they are God's commands. He derives all his knowledge of divine things from the Bible, and learns to think as God thinks, and to speak as God speaks. He habitually prefers spiritual things to temporal ; the smile of God to the applause of mortals, and the heavenly inheritance to this barren wilderness. The will of God is his rule, and the glory of God is his aim. He becomes deeply acquainted with God, and is at peace, and thereby good comes to him.

He is wise for himself, he reaps all the benefit of his wisdom. He pleases God, but cannot profit Him. Hence the question, " Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise is profitable unto himself ? " And again, " If thou be righteous, what givest thou Him ? or what receiveth He of thine hand ? " His wisdom will benefit his fellow-men, but the profit will be principally his own. Being wise, he will escape the snares, dangers, and temptations, into which others fall ; he will secure to himself many, great, and invaluable blessings ; he will obtain a good

report in the church of God ; and be prepared for all the changes to which he may be exposed. Wisdom may not preserve him from trouble, but it will help him in trouble, and secure his speedy and honourable deliverance out of it. And at last, “ They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament ; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.”

Reader, are you wise ? wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus ? Are you wise enough to discover the nature of sin, and hate it ? The guilt of sin, and obtain the pardon of it ? The consequences of sin, and escape from it ? Are you wise enough to flee to Jesus, and make Him your refuge from the wrath to come ? Beware, lest carnal wisdom deceive you, and you be found a fool at the judgment-seat of Christ. Remember the foolish virgins, and let their mistake warn you, and their doom make you cautious ; they had much, but they had not the one thing needful. Be sure you have what will be required of you at death, at the judgment ; a title to heaven, founded in the perfect work of Jesus ; and a meetness for heaven, “ by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.” Make sure work for eternity ; dig deep, and lay your foundation on the rock ; “ Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” If in Christ, you are safe ; if like Christ, you are meet for heaven.

CONTEMPT OF GOD, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

“ If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.”—
Prov. ix. 12.

To scorn, is to treat with contempt ; thus they laughed Jesus to scorn, they treated Him contemptuously. This, unbelief always does ; and every unconverted sinner is treating God with contempt. If God asks his heart, and speak in the kindest terms and most winning accents, saying, “ My son, give me thine heart,” He is treated with contempt ; many never give the request any serious consideration at all, but pass it by, as though not addressed to them, or as beneath their notice ; while others admit its propriety, but never practically attend to it. If He offer a free and full pardon of all sin, to every one who, laying down the weapons of rebellion, will seek it in the name of Jesus ; it is treated with contempt. The sinner knows he must be pardoned, or he is lost for ever : he hears the gracious message of a kind, forgiving God, but it has no effect upon him ; he passes it by as though it were unworthy of his regard. If He send the good news of a complete salvation, without money and without price ; if He say, “ Whosoever will, let him come, and take freely,” the sinner puts it from him, and judges himself unworthy of everlasting life. Without the least show of

reason, he neglects the great salvation, and despises the riches of the goodness and grace of God. In a word, every unconverted sinner scorns the authority of God in the law, and the grace of God in the gospel ; he will not bow to a command, nor accept of a free salvation. He is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked ; but he is also proud, obstinate, perverse, scornful, and unwise.

Reader, is this your case ? If so, God says, “Thou alone shalt bear it.” Bear what ? Thy scorning. What of the scorning ? The blame and the punishment. The whole blame of thy damnation will lie upon thyself. Thou hast procured it unto thyself. It is the fruit of thy scorning, the consequence of thy thus treating God with contempt. The blame is entirely thine own ; it cannot be charged upon God : He did not decree thy damnation ; He warned thee, He expostulated with thee, He invited thee, He presented a full salvation unto thee, He offered thee pardon on the easiest terms ; but you treated the whole with contempt. Neither can it be charged upon the ministers of the gospel ; if faithful, they told thee, from the mouth of God, thy state, thy danger, and urged thee to flee for refuge to Jesus ; they were earnest, affectionate, importunate ; but you treated them with contempt. Nor can you lay the blame on Satan : true, he tempted, but he could not force you : he allured,

but he could not compel. You preferred his counsel to that of your best friends, yea, to the counsel of the Lord and Saviour Himself; you yielded to him, while you rejected your God. The blame will lie upon yourself exclusively and eternally; and so the punishment, "*Thou alone shalt bear it.*" Thou shalt bear the horrors of a guilty conscience, and the wrath of God, "*where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*" in a word, all the consequences of treating God with contempt. Thou shalt bear it alone, without help, without sympathy, without mitigation, and without the most distant prospect of deliverance.

Let me beseech you now to examine yourself. Are you wise? or are you a scorner? One or the other you must be, for the whole world is divided into these two classes; and soon, very soon you will find, that "*if you are wise, you are wise for yourself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.*" If you are not decided, may I ask you, with the Psalmist, "*When will you be wise?*" Or, with Solomon, "*How long will you love simplicity, and delight in your scorning, and hate knowledge?*" Or with Paul, "*How will you escape, if you neglect so great salvation?*" Or with Jesus, "*What will it profit you, if you should gain the whole world, and lose your own soul? or what will you give in exchange for the soul?*"

THE DISTINGUISHING PRAYER.

“ Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.”—
Ps. xxv. 3.

SALVATION is deliverance from evil or danger. The salvation of the gospel is deliverance from sin, condemnation, and the wrath of God. Sin procures condemnation, and condemnation is introductory to punishment. The Lord saves His people *from* their sins. He removes the guilt of sin by the blood of Jesus ; He destroys the power of sin by his Holy Spirit ; and He purges out the love of sin by His sanctifying grace. He becomes their DELIVERER : and saves them with an everlasting salvation. But he not only saves them, but gives them the knowledge of salvation, so that they can rejoice in it. They know Him as their salvation, personally, experimentally, and satisfactorily : and they are happy in their God. His love and power remove their fears ; His word and veracity disperse their doubts ; and His faithfulness and immutability produce confidence. When he lifts up the light of His countenance, or sheds upon them the rays of His love, they exult and say, “ Behold, God is my salvation ; I will trust and not be afraid !

for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song ; He also is become my salvation."

When persons become really concerned for the salvation of their souls, they hear of this ; and it appears to them to be the most desirable blessing ; therefore, they begin to seek it, and in earnestness of soul, with importunity and anxiety, they cry, " Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." Oh, how they long for this favour ! How they pant for this privilege ! They feel as if they could renounce every thing else, if they may but be favoured with this. And this distinguishes those who are taught by the Holy Spirit, from all others : they are serious, they are in earnest, they cannot be satisfied with slight evidences. They wish to feel that they are upon the rock, that God is their refuge and strength. They sigh after the sealing of the Holy Spirit, to enjoy His witness in their hearts. In His holy word, the Lord tells us *whom* He will save, and *how* he will save ; and by His Spirit in the heart, He assures us that He will save *us*. This is done by opening and applying His word, which scatters our doubts, and spreads a sweet and holy peace through the soul : by shedding abroad His love in our hearts, and then we feel that we love Him ; and have an inward consciousness that there is nothing between God and our souls but love. We are persuaded that God is reconciled to us, and at peace with us, through

the blood of His dear Son ; we feel a hatred to all sin spring up ; we are careful to flee from temptation ; we cleave to Jesus ; and dread the thought of losing the sweet presence of our God. We now possess courage, and can say, “ The Lord is my light and my salvation ; whom shall I fear ? ” (Ps. xxvii. 1.) : we enjoy confidence, and exclaim, “ God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear : ” (Ps. xli. 1, 2) : we are full of praise, and sing, “ Thou art my God, and I will praise thee : thou art my God, I will exalt thee. ” (Ps. cxviii. 28.) Dear reader, has this prayer been yours ? Know you any thing of deliverance from sin ? Have you enjoyed the testimony of the Holy Spirit in your heart ? It is heaven begun in the soul, it is true happiness. O seek it, seek it at once ; and rest not until you enjoy it.

“ Come, Holy Ghost, my heart inspire !
Attest that I am born again ;
Come, and baptize me now with fire,
Nor let thy former gifts be vain ;
I cannot rest in sins forgiven—
Where is the earnest of my heaven ?
Where the indubitable seal,
That ascertains the kingdom mine ?
The powerful stamp I long to feel,
The signature of love divine !
Oh, shed it in my heart abroad,
Fulness of love, of heaven, of God ! ”

THE BELIEVER COMMENDED.

“Blessed is she that believed ; for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.”—Luke i. 45.

MARY's faith was tried, for she was called to believe what no one else ever was ; and the whole highly improbable. She was to believe that though a virgin, she should have a son ; and though a sinner, her son should be pure and holy ; that though her son, He should be, and be called, the Son of the Highest ; and that though her family was so poor, that she was espoused to a carpenter, yet God would give unto Him the throne of his father David. All this was directly opposite to appearances ; but God spake, and Mary believed : this was the ground of her faith. She knew He always intended what He said, could perform all he promised, frequently did wondrous things, and never failed to fulfil His word ; therefore she surrendered herself up, and said, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it unto me according to thy word.” She visited her cousin Elizabeth, told her the whole of the circumstances, and she said, “Blessed is she that believed ; for there shall be a ful-

filment of those things which were told her from the Lord.' She honoured God by believing His word, and God honoured her by the testimony of her aged cousin. She was blessed of God, and He did fulfil all that He had spoken unto her.

Mary is proposed for our example. God hath spoken to us, He requires us to believe, and to every believer he will fulfil his word. He speaks to our experience, and promises according to our wants. Are we guilty? Do our sins appear of a flagrant and alarming character? He says, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Do we believe this? Reader, do you? Do you believe that God calls you to Him, just as you are, and calls you on purpose to forgive you? That if you confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive your sins, and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness? This is the fact of the case, that God stands pledged to forgive every sinner who frankly confesses his sins at His throne, and to do so for His own name's sake. Again, are you thirsting for grace and His Holy Spirit? He speaks to you, and says, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will

hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." Do you believe this? God means it. He is faithful to His Word, and He cannot deny Himself. Once more; are you in perplexity, and know not which way to take? The Lord speaks to your case, He sympathises with you, and says, "I will bring the blind by a way which they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they had not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." Believest thou this? If so, "Blessed is he that believeth, for there shall be a fulfilment of those things which were spoken by the Lord."

The promises are intended to disperse our fears, raise our expectations, exercise our faith, encourage us in our prayers, and fill us with joy and peace. Whoever believes them, and pleads them before God in prayer, will have them fulfilled to him to the very letter. To doubt them, is to reflect upon the veracity of God; to neglect them is to despise our own mercies; and to question the fulfilment of them, if we really believe them, is to question whether the promiser is God. His foreknowledge, unchangeableness, power, veracity, faithfulness, covenant, oath, and the

blood of Jesus all conspire to say, “*There shall be* a fulfilment of those things which were spoken by the Lord.” Let us, therefore, resist our fears, condemn our unbelief, confess our doubts before the Lord, and seek for more faith. Our God giveth liberally and upbraideth not ; He will give *us* more grace ; and enable us to believe, not only to the saving of the soul, but will fill us with joy and peace in believing.

‘ Why should I yield to slavish fears ?
God is the same to endless years ;
Though clouds and darkness hide His face,
He’s boundless both in truth and grace.

Would e’er the God of love make known
The worth and glory of His Son ;
His love and righteousness display,
And cast my soul at last away ?

Would he reveal my sin and woe,
‘Teach me my numerous wants to know.
And help me in my darkest frame,
To build my hopes on Jesus’ name ?

Would God preserve my soul from hell,
And make his love at times prevail ?
Invite, exhort, and promise grace,
Yet spurn me from His glorious face ?

No ; He’s my Father and my Friend,
On whose sure promise I depend ;
If now from me His face He hides,
Immutable His love abides.”

THE INQUIRY.

"Is it Peace?"—2 Kings ix. 17.

PEACE is either agreement with man, or reconciliation with God ; the former is important, the latter is invaluable. Peace with God is external, as proclaimed ; internal, as enjoyed ; or eternal, as promised. The first is in the gospel, the second in the heart, and the third in heaven. It is in reference to peace with God that we ask the question, "Is it peace?"

Aged pilgrim, is it peace ? Thou hast long been pacing the valley of Baca, thou hast passed through many changes, thou art approaching thy end ; the snows of age are upon thy head, and the wrinkles of care upon thy brow, but is the peace of God in thy heart ? Are thy prospects bright ? Does the goodly land appear spread out before thee ? Are thy evidences strong ? Does faith cleave to the Rock ? Does love burn like the fire upon the altar ? Does hope hold like the anchor within the pier ? Does devotion lead thee upward to thy God ? Thou wilt soon be called to lay aside thy staff ; to bid farewell to the gloomy desert ; thy journey is almost ended, and it is important that the peace of God should keep thy heart.

Tried Christian, is it peace? Thy trials, though many, painful, and tedious, are but proofs of thy heavenly Father's love; they are sent in mercy, they come to convince thee that this is not thy rest. Thy Father's wisdom chose them, His love sent them, and His mercy will sanctify them to thee; they may alarm those who neglect their Bible, but they cannot injure a child of God. Thou art tried, but is it peace? Art thou looking to Jesus? He can hush the storm, and still the tempest. He is always near in trouble. Is thine eye fixed upon Him? Does thine heart repose on His tender love and faithful word? Do you recognise the Lord's hand in your trials? His hand is in them, whether you see it or no. He sends, bounds, and removes them: and it has often comforted the saint to realize that the hand of God is in every trial, trouble, and disappointment. Do you suffer as a Christian? With patience, with submission, with fear lest you should offend your God. If so, it is peace: all is well between God and thy soul.

Young believer, is it peace? You have lately forsaken the ranks of the enemy, and turned your back upon the world; are you relying simply on Jesus? No gospel-peace without this. Self must be renounced. "JESUS ONLY," must be our motto. Except we rely wholly and only on Him for acceptance with God; except we look to His blood alone for pardon, and to His

righteousness alone for justification, we cannot enjoy peace. Are you strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus? He has grace for you, every kind of grace : grace for suffering, and grace for service : and you must live upon the grace that is in Christ, or you can have no stable peace. Are you aiming to be useful ? Happiness is closely allied to usefulness. Activity for God, from love to Jesus, will promote and maintain peace.

Undecided soul, is it peace? How can it be? There is no peace without decision. You must first decide for Christ ; exercise faith in His atoning blood ; and walk with God and His people before you can know peace.

Sinner ! is it peace ? Oh, no. A dead calm there may be, but peace there cannot be. Peace ; what, while you love sin ! Peace ; what, while you slight the Saviour ! Peace ; what, while you prefer the world to God ! Peace ; what, while you put off the evil day, and go on still in your trespasses ! Nay, "there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." He has no peace in life, his bosom is like the restless ocean ; he has no peace in death, his end is like the midnight storm. He lives in uncertainty, dies in perplexity, and enters another world without hope.

THE LOVE OF JESUS.

"I have loved you."—John xv. 12.

WHOM does Jesus love? Every believer, whatever his outward circumstances may be. Every one that loves Him, or loves his saints because they are His, or are like Him, or for His sake. How wonderful that Jesus should love us, who are so mean, so debased, so ungrateful! It is; but it is fact, and He has proved it in a variety of ways.

He displayed His love before we knew Him, or were even capable of doing so, in preferring our nature to the angels: they fell as we did, but their nature was more noble, their fall was from a greater eminence, yet He did not assume their nature to save them, but He became man to save us; *and why?* He tells us, "*I have loved you.*" In making a full atonement for our sins, He satisfied justice to the full. He removed the curse entirely. He produced for us a righteousness, sparkling with glory beyond the rays of the morning sun; and why? He tells us, "*I have loved you.*" In conquering all our spiritual adversaries, that had overcome our nature, and had taken captive our entire race. No human arm was strong enough to overcome them, no mere creature could escape from them; but He came, He fought, He conquered, He triumphed in our nature, in our name, for our sake; and why? He tells us, "*I have loved you.*" In going to heaven

as our forerunner. He has carried our nature into the presence of the Father, He has shewn that the path to glory is practicable, and He is now actively employed in heaven providing places for us; and why? He tells us, "I have loved you." In sending the Holy Comforter, who comes in His name, to quicken, call, cleanse, and sanctify. By Him we are converted to God, prepared for glory, rendered useful in the present world, and comforted in all our tribulations. He was sent by Jesus into the church when first enthroned at the right hand of the Father, He was sent by Jesus into our hearts; and why? He tells us, "I have loved you." In acting as our intercessor and advocate before the Father. "He made intercession for the transgressors." He has pleaded for us, He does plead for us, He will continue to plead for us; and why? He tells us, "I have loved you."

He has displayed His love in His dealings with us. He found us cruel, determined, unfeeling enemies; but He reconciled us, made us friends, and filled us with wonder at His love. He bare with us, while under conviction of sin, when we thought hardly of Him, doubted Him, and tried by all possible means to do without Him. He keeps us by His power and Holy Spirit, for we cannot be trusted for one solitary moment. He only chastens us in love when he might justly punish us in wrath. He restores us from all our

wanderings, and freely forgives our follies. He carries on His work within us, and generously supplies all our needs. He rejoices to save us, though mean as worms, and viler than the earth. He does all for us, and does all gladly, notwithstanding our ingratitude, perverseness, and rebellion; and why? "He tells us, "I have loved you." His love is displayed in what He intends do for us. He will come in glory and majesty as our Bridegroom, to fetch us home, and openly marry us, and make us the partners of His throne, triumphs, and glory for ever. He will separate us from all sin and sinners, and every thing that can pain, trouble, or grieve us. He will clothe us with glory bright as the sun, and lasting as eternity. He will bring us to reign where we served, to triumph where we suffered, and clothe and crown us with glory where we were put to shame. He will fill us with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and give us to possess more than eye has seen, or ear heard, or the heart of man has conceived; and why? He tells us, "I have loved you." What will not love do? What has not the love of Jesus done, or promised to do? It is, it will be, it must be matter of wonder throughout eternity, that Jesus should love us so; so freely, so constantly, with love so pure, unbounded, and Godlike. Behold, how He loved us! Behold, and wonder! Behold, and praise! Behold, and love Him in return!

THE TRUE TOKEN.

“Give me a true token.”—Joshua ii. 12.

THIS was the request of the harlot Rahab. Jericho was threatened with destruction ; its doom was fast approaching ; its danger was now imminent ; the spies came to her house, and she received them, for she believed that God would give the place into the hands of Israel ; her concern for the salvation of herself and family was great and natural ; her precaution was wise ; she wanted a token, one which she could trust, which would inspire confidence ; she asked it, and her request was granted. She used a scarlet-coloured rope to let down the spies, and they said, “Thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window, which thou didst let us down by.” And she collected all her family together, into her house, “and she bound the scarlet line in the window.” This was to mark the house, to remind the spies, to support her hope, and preserve her family. It was visible, being of a scarlet colour ; it was useful, being the cord by which the spies escaped. It was the means of the salvation of the family ; for when Jericho was destroyed Joshua said “Go into the harlot’s house

and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her :” and they did so.

Now let us improve the subject. The world is threatened with destruction, as Jericho was ; its doom is fast approaching ; the danger is near and imminent ; we should be concerned for our safety, and the salvation of those connected with us ; we should not be satisfied with a “ Peradventure we may be safe,” but should seek “ a true token.” The Lord gives such, many enjoy them, and others possess them without being satisfied respecting them. The life of God in the soul is a true token of safety ; if quickened by the Holy Spirit, if God dwells in us, and occupies our thoughts, engages our affections, and separates us from sin and folly, it is a clear proof that we are the Lord’s. The fear of the Lord, by which men depart from evil, is also “ a true token.” If a person fears to offend God, and desires above every thing to please Him : if, with this end in view, every plan is formed, every purpose executed, and every duty attended to, it is a scriptural evidence of union to Christ. The spirit of prayer is also “ a true token.” If we are taught our need of the blessings God has promised ; if we experience the irrepressible desire after them ; if we are frequently prompted to retire to pray for them ; if we are assisted in pleading with God for them, with fervour, zeal, and importunity, if prayer becomes natural to our souls, like breath-

ing to our bodies ; if it is our relief in trouble, our solace in sorrow, our delight in joy, and is felt to be our privilege, it is clear that we are born from above. True repentance is “a true token.” By which we mean heartfelt sorrow for sin, because it is an offence against God and greivous in his sight ; accompanied with a loathing of sin, and departure from it, on account of its filthiness and evil character. Such repentance is the gift of Jesus, the production of the Holy Spirit, and the distinguishing mark of an Israelite indeed. Faith in Jesus is “a true token.” That is, not only giving credence to His word, but resting upon His perfect work for acceptance with God, looking to His mediation as the only ground of hope and comfort, and presenting and pleading His atoning blood before God for all we need. Faith always fastens the scarlet line in the window, or sprinkles the doorposts with the blood of the paschal lamb, that the inhabitants may be safe from the sword of justice and the wrath of God. Love to the saints is “a true token.” Loving them because they are holy, and because Jesus loves them ; loving them though poor, afflicted, persecuted, and despised ; loving them so as to be willing to do any thing for them, for Jesus’ sake. A holy life, flowing from faith in Christ, is “a true token.” If we are united to Jesus, the root being holy, we shall be holy too ; if Jesus dwells in us, He will sanctify us, and we shall breathe

His spirit, imitate His example, and aim at His glory. Reader, have you "*a true token*?" Is it visible as the glowing scarlet, and useful as the cord which let down the spies? Has it secured others, as well as benefited yourself? Are you seeking a true token? If so, follow it up, be not easily satisfied, neither be discouraged. Pray, 'Give me a token for good.' Is the line in the window? Does the whole family unite?

"When God's own arm, His power to shew,
Threw down the walls of Jericho,
In Rahab's house was safety found,
For there the scarlet thread was bound.

'Come, kindred, here, make haste,' she cried,
'Destruction waits on every side ;
No harm shall enter where we dwell,
The scarlet thread secures us well.'

Like Israel safe, whose favour'd door,
Was sprinkled well with paschal gore ;
The sacred sign was just the same,
The scarlet thread, or slaughter'd lamb.

But we can nobler wonders tell,
By Jesus' blood redeem'd from hell ;
Secured by this from wrath divine,
We bless the sacred, peaceful sign."

THE BURDEN.

‘ O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ’—Rom. viii. 24.

THIS is the language of the apostle Paul, and conveys to the mind some idea of the strong inward conflict he endured. He speaks in the first person singular all through the connexion, and uses language which it is difficult to misunderstand, unless the mind is prejudiced against the truth. Here is Paul’s heart laid open, the working of his mind set forth, the conflict in his bosom exposed ; the flesh was lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, so that he could not do the things he would. He delighted in the law of God, which none but a Christian can do ; he panted for holiness as with every breath, but he felt evil working in his nature, and sometimes prevailing against him, and he cries out, “ O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ”

He was burdened, and he groaned being burdened. But his burden was nothing external ; he could triumph over all his external trials, and say, “ None of these things move me.” Nor was it

his natural body, which he inhabited as an inconvenient tabernacle. But it was the corruption of his nature ; the plague of the heart ; the law in his members, warring against the law of his mind ; and this, like a dead corpse fastened to a living body, was weighty, loathsome, deadly, and a constant hindrance to him. It was the consequence of Adam's sin, and is in the seat of life ; and, like a flowing fountain, sends out streams of corruption, which defile the thoughts, desires, motives, plans, affections, and operations. Its parts, are the lusts of the flesh working powerfully ; its tendency, is to death, or separation from God ; and while it is a part of the Christian, he renounces it, disowns it, and says, " It is no more I, but sin that dwelleth in me." Still it bears him down to earth, hinders him in every holy exercise, depresses him and sinks his spirit in gloom, unfits him for the enjoyment of the high and holy privileges of the gospel, and causes him in bitterness of soul to cry, " O wretched man that I am !"

But we are not to suppose the Apostle was positively unhappy, for he was not. He was delivered from guilt ; and though occasionally overcome, he was not a slave, but a son of God, by faith in Christ Jesus. Still he felt sin working, lust rising, and pollution flowing ; these things hindered him. They were powerful, he hated them ; they put him to grief and pain, and

as a person grieved in spirit, he groaned ; as one opposed, he wrestled ; as one in pain, he sighed for ease ; as sorrowful he pined for comfort ; as wearied, he longed for rest ; as unable to deliver himself, he applied to his God ; as conscious that it would last through life, he cried, " O wretched man that I am ! "

" Who shall deliver me ? " He knew who would deliver him, and he thanks God for it ; it is not the language of ignorance, but of impassioned desire. He longs for deliverance, and that, because he knew that his God hated sin, and his one ruling desire was to please God in all things. He found also, that his burden prevented or interrupted his fellowship with God ; and being led away by its effect sometimes, his Father hid His face from him. His evident love to holiness had become natural ; consequently his hatred to sin, in every shape and form, especially in himself, was strong and painful. He found also, that sin dwelling in him, unfitted him for those high and holy duties which devolved upon him ; and indisposed him occasionally for attending to them. It led him into evil, and gave Satan and the world a degree of power over him. All which things raised in his soul a burning desire for entire deliverance from this body of death, this fountain of impurity, this law in the members ; and therefore he cries out, " Who shall deliver me ? "

See, my christian reader, the nature and tendency of sin ; it plagued, pained, hindered, and caused an Apostle to call himself a wretched man. See also what we are to expect below, even sorrow, grief, hindrances, and pains ; the body of death will burden us, press us down, and cause us sometimes to long to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Believer, thy case is not singular, or new ; but thy experience is the experience of all the saints, even of those who were most highly favoured ; Paul felt just as you feel, groaned as you groan, and longed for deliverance as you do now. Nothing affects the true believer so painfully as sin ; and when his conduct is so correct, that those around him can see no cause for sorrow or complaint, he feels enough to mourn over, on account of the sin that dwelleth in him.

“ Why should a soul redeem’d with blood,
Called by grace and born of God,
Feel a perpetual war within,
’Twixt reigning grace and striving sin ?

’Tis but to make him ev’ry day
From self to Jesus turn away ;
And ’tis a sign of life within,
To groan beneath the load of sin.

Who but the soul who feels his woe,
Will to the blood of sprinkling go ?
And seek salvation only there,
From all that he shall feel or fear.”

JESUS GLORIFIED, AND THE SINNER ENCOURAGED.

“Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.”
—John xii. 23.

SINNERS seldom think aright in reference to themselves, their God, or the Saviour. When a man begins to feel his true state, and to see his real condition, he immediately begins to think that there is no mercy for him, and he fancies that Jesus will not receive him. It never enters into his mind, that Jesus receives none but such characters as he discovers himself to be; or that Jesus can be glorified in his salvation, and is well-pleased to see him weep and pray. But such is the case. A few Gentile sinners desired to see Jesus; Philip and Andrew tell Him so, and He immediately replies, “Now is the Son of man glorified.” If language means any thing, this expression of Jesus means, that the coming sinner glorified him. He loves to save sinners; it is not only His work, but His delight; no one was ever half so much pleased with his employment as Jesus is; it just suits His nature, gratifies His tender loving heart, and increases His pure and holy joy. He is glorified when poor

souls come to Him as sinners, having nothing to plead, but His word ; nothing to appeal to, but His mercy ; nothing to present, but their lost and ruined persons. When they come with ardent desires, crying, " Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me ;" desires which none can satisfy but Himself ; desires which nothing will meet, but a full and free salvation.

Jesus is glorified, when we come to Him as a Saviour ; to be saved from sin, wrath, and death, by His obedience, blood-shedding, and intercession. When we come to Him as the great Teacher sent from God, to be taught to know, believe, and do the truth. When we come to Him as the Physician, to be healed of the disease of sin, and prepared to glorify God in our body, soul, and spirit, which are His. We glorify Him, not by doubting His power, willingness, or tender love ; but by believing His invitation and faithful promises. He is not glorified by our slavish fears, unfounded suspicions, or guilty shyness ; but by our hope in His mercy, our earnest prayer, our steady reliance, our confidence in His word, and our humility before His throne. And when we have found mercy and enjoy peace, He is glorified by our grateful love, fervent zeal, prompt obedience, and diligence in spreading His fame.

The hour is come, and Jesus is glorified, when many come together : when great sinners come ; when they come who have long delayed, and

wickedly refused to come before. He is also glorified when the coming sinner receives His pardon, feels in himself that he is healed, opens his mouth in praise, runs in the way of His commandments, fixes his streaming eyes on the cross, and devotes his entire person to His service. The salvation of the sinner glorifies the blood which procured his pardon, the righteousness which justifies him from all things, the grace which sanctifies his nature, and the mercy which pitied him in his lost condition.

Reader, what encouragement is given thee to come to Jesus! Do you not see, that in coming you not only obtain an eternal salvation for yourself, but you please, delight and glorify the Saviour also? Are you discouraged? Think of this. Believe this, and thy fears will flee, thy doubts must depart, and confidence and peace succeed. Have you never come to Jesus? Do you not need salvation? Can you obtain it without an application to Him? You cannot. Without Him you perish, and perish for ever. Come to Him, and you live. Stay away from Him, and you die in your sins. Come then to Jesus. Come at once. Approach Him, for His throne is before thee, His eye is upon thee, the word of salvation is sent to thee, His hand is stretched out to receive thee, and when you fall at His feet and cry from the heart, "Jesus, save me, save me by thy grace, save me to thy glory,

save me for thy mercy's sake!" then He will say, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified in the salvation of the sinner."

Believer, was it not a happy hour, when we first came to Jesus, and found him faithful to His word? Does it not cause thy bosom to glow with gladness, to think that Jesus can be, and is glorified in thy salvation? What a source of consolation is this—Jesus is glorified in saving me! Jesus was glorified when I came and fell before Him, feeling that I was not worthy to look up to His throne, or speak one word in his presence; when I cried for mercy at his hands, and found Him gracious, kind, and true. And oh! delightful thought, Jesus will be glorified in my salvation throughout eternity! Oh, the pleasure He will feel when the myriads of His redeemed surround Him and ascribe all their salvation unto Him!

Trembling sinner, cease thy doubting,—

Look to Christ, the sinner's friend;

He is now thy soul inviting,—

To His precious words attend:

Come, poor sinner,—

Come to me, the sinner's Friend.

I am ready to receive you;

I will peace and pardon send;

Come to me,—I will relieve you,

On my faithful word depend:

Come, poor sinner,—

Come to me, the sinner's Friend.

FAVOUR NEGLECTED.

"I gave her space to repent, and she repented not."—Rev. ii. 21.

So spake the Saviour in reference to some ungodly characters at Thyatira ; and the testimony is true of many in our beloved country. Many have space to repent, who have not grace to repent. These are very different things, and do not always go together. Each of them is a favour, a favour conferred on those who may justly be punished for their sins, and be punished without one moment's delay.

Space to repent is a favour. Consider your *origin* : you are the child of a sinner ; of one who rebelled against God, under the most aggravating circumstances, in the most inexcusable way. Look at your *nature* : your heart is enmity against the God in whom you live, move, and have your being. You have hated Him with a perfect hatred, and so far as you have known Him or His will, you have manifested it. Review your *conduct* : it has been in direct opposition to His word. You have said unto God, "Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Read the *sentence* passed upon you long since, "The soul that sinneth it shall

die." "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." Think of your folly, in childhood, youth, and manhood. How have you slighted the most solemn warnings, trifled with the most gracious invitations, and put away the messages of mercy from you, judging yourself unworthy of everlasting life ! Put these things together, and say, if God give thee space to repent, is it not a favour ? Could it be demanded, or expected as a matter of right ? It could not. It is a favour, and one which should be instantly improved.

The design of this favour is that you may repent. The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance. Time is given you that you may reflect upon your conduct, perceive your danger, feel the need of mercy, confess your sins to the Lord, obtain the pardon of your transgressions, and reform your life according to His word. It assures you that God has no delight in punishing, but would rather that you turn from your wickedness and live. He does not desire that you should perish in your sins, or He would have cut you off long ago. He prefers penitence to punishment ; this is clear from His *nature*, which is love ; from His *word*, which invites you to His throne of grace ; from His *oath*, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his

way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways ; for why will ye die ?"—from His *conduct* ; He waits to be gracious, and never yet cast out one that came ; for the *provision* He has made : He has provided a Saviour, sent a message of mercy, suspended punishment, appointed a public judgment, given space for repentance, and commanded "all men every where to repent."

But see how His favour is neglected, and what obstinacy is manifested. "She repented not." So it must be said of many. Reader, can it justly be said of you ? What ! do you still prefer sin to holiness ; Satan to Jesus ; and hell to heaven ? Is not repentance necessary, necessary for you ? Is it not required ? Does not Jesus say, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Is it not promised ? Jesus is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and the remission of sins. Did you ever desire to possess it ? Did you ever seek it ? Is it not expected, expected of you ? Are you not inexcusable if you live and die impenitent ? You must repent, or perish. Just contrast the patience and long-suffering of God, with the pride and obstinacy of men. Remember, that repentance alone can prevent your ruin, your eternal ruin. Repentance requires time : space is given you for repentance, you have it to-day, but it may expire before to-morrow. Yea, you are not sure of another moment. Where time is given, fruits

meet for repentance are expected. How many years have been given you? How often has the Lord come seeking fruit on you, a barren fig-tree? Ah! if he should now say, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground!" How fearful! How dreadful this! When the space given for repentance is trifled away, the sinner perishes with double destruction. Aged sinner, read, tremble, repent; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

"Repent! the voice celestial cries,
Nor longer dare delay;
The wretch that scorns the mandate dies,
And meets a fiery day.

No more the sovereign eye of God
O'erlooks the crimes of men;
His heralds are despatched abroad
To warn the world of sin.

The summons reach thro' all the earth;
Let each attend and fear;
Listen, ye men of royal birth,
And let your vassals hear!

Together in His presence bow,
And all your guilt confess;
Embrace the blessed Saviour now,
Nor trifle with His grace.

Bow, ere the awful trumpet sound,
And call you to His bar;
For mercy knows the appointed bound,
And turns to vengeance there."

THE SINNER APPEALED TO.

“ When will ye be wise ? ”—Ps. xciv. 8.

IN what does true wisdom consist ? In hearkening to counsel (Prov. xii. 5,) the counsel of the wise, the experienced and the holy ; but especially in hearkening to the counsel of God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who counsels us to procure from Him wealth, raiment, and wisdom, which last forever. (Rev. iii. 18.) In gathering in summer, and so providing for winter which is approaching. (Prov. x. 5.) In the summer of youth, we should provide for the winter of age ; and in the summer of life, for the winter of death. Now we are surrounded by the means of salvation ; now we are hailed by the inviting voice of the Saviour, saying, “ Seek ye me, and ye shall live ; ” and now we are encouraged by the gracious assurance, “ Every one that seeketh findeth.” Wisdom consists in obtaining salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, for which purpose the Holy Scriptures are given us, which are able to make us “ wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Tim. iii. 15.) In a word, it is our wisdom to avoid misery, disgrace, and death ; and to secure the greatest happiness, honour, and everlasting safety.

But what folly is generally displayed! Men prefer a course which must secure misery, disgrace, and destruction. Is this wisdom, or is it folly? "The wages of sin is death." "The way of transgressors is hard." Is it wisdom to slight the warnings of mercy, which are given that we may avoid the snare, escape the pit, and obtain invaluable blessings? Is it wisdom, to excuse ourselves from sitting down at the gospel feast, when invited to partake of the benevolence of God, and feed on the bread which endureth to everlasting life? Is it wisdom, to reject the word of the Lord, which counsels us in kindness, and sets before us the way of life and the way of death? Is it wisdom to trifle, with death at our elbow judgment in prospect, and hell or heaven but a short distance before us? It is not, it cannot be wise to do so. Was Cain wise, who slew his mother, went out from the presence of the Lord, ruined his own soul, and entailed a curse on his posterity? Was Esau wise, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright?—for ye know how that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. Was Achan wise, who for a wedge of gold and a Babylonish garment ruined himself and his family? Was Judas wise, who for gain sold his Master, and went to his own place? Ah! if you could hear their groans, their

lamentations, their self-reproaches, you would not, you could not say that they were wise. But are you wise, or do you follow their pernicious ways? Do you believe in Jesus? Are you united with the saints? Will you *now* consecrate yourself to the Lord?

When will you be wise? You have, perhaps, heard the gospel, you have sometimes felt something of its power, you have promised at some future time to attend to it, you have postponed it again and again, you have delayed until *now*. Surely you are foolish, you are in the greatest danger, you are totally inexcusable. When will you be wise? Are you now young? Youth is the time to incline the ear unto wisdom, and apply the heart unto understanding; to cry after knowledge, and lift up the voice for understanding; to seek for her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures; then you shall understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. "For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. (Prov. ii. 2—6.) If you are not wise in youth, it is probable you never will be. Few become wise when settled down in life, and fewer still in old age. My young friend, look at the gay young man on his dying pillow, hear his dying regrets, mark his gloomy end; was he wise? Look for one moment at the state and condition of lost souls; were they wise? Now pause, solemnly pause,

and listen : God asks you from His throne, " When will you be wise ? " Jesus asks you from His cross, " When will you be wise ? " The Holy Spirit speaks to you by the Bible, and asks, " When will you be wise ? " The preacher cries to you from the pulpit ; he asks, " When will you be wise ? " The saint from the church of God, asks you, " When will you be wise ? " And angels from the upper skies, ask, " When will you be wise ? " See the end of the wise ; " they shine as the brightness of the firmament." (Dan xii. 3.) See the end of the foolish ; they cry, " The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." (Jer. viii 20.)

HOPE ENCOURAGEMENT

"With the Lord there is mercy."—Ps. cxxx. 7.

WE often think with the Lord there is justice, there is holiness, there is wrath; but we do not realize this sweet truth, "With the Lord there is mercy." Hope needs encouragement, and here the Lord has provided it. There is mercy with God for sinners, mercy on the ground of an atonement, mercy exactly suited to every case. Mercy in all its fulness, deeper than the depths of human guilt, higher than the mountains of a creature's sins, and broader than all our wants. Mercy in all its variety, for every purpose, for every season, for every applicant. Mercy in all its tenderness. Mercy in Jesus has a melting eye, a mother's heart, a velvet hand; it has bowels of compassion, and sympathy too deep to be described.

There is mercy with the Lord to receive sinners; it looks out for the sinner's approach, draws him with invitations and promises, welcomes him to a Father's bosom, and bids him not fear, but frankly confess and hope. There is mercy to pardon; to pardon fully, to pardon freely, to pardon cheerfully, to pardon frequently, to pardon every confessing soul, to pardon like a God. There is mercy to introduce to privileges, even all

the glorious privileges of the gospel ; such as peace with God, access to God, acceptance with God, the sweet friendship of God. There is mercy to bless beyond our largest expectations ; yea, exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think.

There is mercy ; and God loves to display it, to display it in the salvation of the vilest of men, in the most wonderful and remarkable manner. He loves to impart it, and to hear the recipient say with Paul, “ I obtained mercy.” He loves to exalt and glorify it, as He does before all comers ; and will especially at the last, when all the vessels of mercy are collected, purified, filled, exalted, and arranged before His eternal throne. Then will mercy shine forth in all its glory, brighter than the morning sun, and lovelier than the lily’s tints.

“ With the Lord *there is* mercy,” as much now as there ever was, and it is as free as ever ; and this is published in order to encourage sinners who have never sought for mercy to seek it. That those who have never come to Jesus, may come ; may come at once, may come with confidence and hope. Mercy comprises all the sinner needs, mercy gives all the sinner wants, mercy welcomes every one that comes. None need fear, none need delay, none need stay to enquire, “ May I come ?” for “ with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption.”

It is designed also to direct those who are coming to bring nothing with them, for mercy has all they can possibly need ; nor to be discouraged because they have nothing to bring, for mercy loves to relieve misery, and to supply the wants of the poor and destitute. Ye poor, ye perishing, ye unworthy, ye doubting, ye fearing souls ; fear not, delay not, for “ with the Lord there is mercy,” and mercy for you !

Backslider, this is good news for thee ; there is mercy with the Lord, even for backsliders. Mercy to pardon thy crimson crimes, mercy to heal thy festering sores, mercy to cheer thy drooping heart, mercy to restore thy wandering soul to the paths of holiness and peace. Yield not to fears, give not way to despair, thy God tells thee there is mercy with Him, and He can tell thee no more. The mercy that received thee at first, waits to receive thee again ; the mercy that first gave thee peace, waits to bestow upon thee the same blessing ; the mercy that assured thee that God would never leave thee nor forsake thee, will make good the word ; therefore return unto the Lord thy God, and He will abundantly pardon.

Believer, there is mercy with thy God to help thee in every time of need ; to comfort thee in sorrow, to sanctify thy troubles, to bring thee through all thy trials, and make all things work together for thy good. The mercy of God is like Himself, infinite, and eternal ; it is always on the

throne, and reigns through the atonement of Jesus ; and may be obtained by every applicant, without money and without price. Hope therefore in God. Hope at all times, and under all circumstances. Hope in His mercy honours him ; but doubts and slavish fears reflect on His pity, His kindness, and love. He asks your confidence. He promises you grace. He forbids your fears. He swears that He will not be wroth with His saints, and that He hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner ; therefore “ hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plentiful redemption.”

THE TWO ESSENTIALS.

“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”—Rom. x. 9.

THE essentials of religion are few and simple ; the weakest may understand them, and the poorest may possess them. There must be faith, for without faith it is impossible to please God: by faith is not meant the cold assent of the understanding, but the warm confidence of the heart. It must be the faith of the heart, or a cordial believing, approving, and confiding in the gospel. Believing in the resurrection of Christ, which proves that His claim was just, that His work is finished and accepted, and that His authority is now universal. If the resurrection of Christ is believed, the truth of His doctrines must be admitted, and His right to claim, rule, and use us for His glory be allowed. “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” Faith is not instead of righteousness, but the gospel presents the righteousness of Jesus as God’s free gift ; and faith leads the heart to embrace it as presented ; and thus the believer becomes righteous, is justified before God, and is treated as such. The faith of the heart, is confidence in God’s word, dependance on Christ’s work, leading to an affectionate reliance on the faithfulness of Jehovah.

He that believes must confess. He must confess that Jesus Christ, who was crucified, is raised from the dead ; and that being raised from the dead, "He is Lord of all." That He alone is the Saviour. That His blood made atonement, and procured peace with God. That He is all He said, did all He undertook, and will perform all that is written in His word. This confession must be with the mouth, in words ; and with the life, in deeds. It must be open, without fear, sincere, without disguise ; cordial, without regret ; at any expense or hazard to which it may expose us. Without confession, there is no salvation ; for "the fearful," who are afraid or ashamed to confess Christ, "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with brimstone and fire, which is the second death." Faith secures an interest in the justifying righteousness of Jesus ; and confession secures an interest in, and the fulfilment of, the promise of Christ. "Whoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. x. 32, 33 ; also Luke xii. 8, 9.)

Confession with the mouth, when connected with the faith of the heart, is also an evidence that God is with us, and dwelleth in us, as it is written, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is

the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." (1 John iv. 15.) If we profess, without possessing, it is hypocrisy and deceit; and if we possess without professing, it is no less. How can we be honest, if we believe in Christ, and do not confess it? Does not faith regard His precepts as well as His doctrines or promises, and does He not require us to confess Him? Is not the believer afraid to live in wilful disobedience? but is it not disobedience to refuse to profess Christ? Ought we not to endeavour to put our salvation out of doubt? but how can we if we do not confess Him before men? Is it right to receive His benefits, and refuse to own who is our benefactor, especially when He requires it at our hands?

The demands of the gospel are simple and intelligible, as, "Believe, confess, be saved." Accept of what God gives, and acknowledge it to His praise. Receive what He presents, and be honest enough to own it. A public profession of Christ is indispensable; there is no private way to heaven. You must not only secretly believe and privately pray, but you must openly acknowledge and profess faith in your Saviour. You must avow that you take Him for your example, that you listen to Him as your Prophet, that you trust in Him as your Priest, and that you bow to and own Him as your King. Those who are afraid to confess Christ, cannot expect

to be saved by Him ; their faith is dead, their dependence vain, and their hopes delusive. But “ if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved ; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” “ It is a faithful saying, For if we be dead with Christ, we shall also live with Him ; if we suffer we shall also reign with Him ; if we deny Him, He also will deny us ; if we believe not, yet He abideth faithful ; He cannot deny Himself. Of these things put them in remembrance. (2 Tim. ii. 11—14.)

“ Ashamed of Christ !—my soul, disdain
The mean ungenerous thought ;
Shall I disown that friend, whose blood
To man salvation brought ?

With the glad news of love and peace,
From heaven to earth He came :
For us endured the painful cross—
For us despised the shame.

At *His* command, we must take up
Our cross without delay,
Our lives—and thousand lives of ours—
Can ne’er His love repay.

But should we in the evil day,
From our profession fly,—
Jesus, the judge, before the world
The traitor will deny.

A SOURCE OF COMFORT.

“The Lord will give grace.”—Ps. lxxxiv. 11

No one knows what is before him, nor is it possible for human foresight to provide against the evils which may arise ; but this is the Christian's comfort, his God knows and has provided for all, and will give him grace according to his day. Grace in God is His free and sovereign favour ; grace from God is the expression and proof of that favour. Grace given is sometimes wisdom to direct ; at others, strength to enable ; at others, holiness to sanctify ; it takes the form we need, and is just what we want, and all we want. “The Lord will give grace,” more grace (James iv. 6 ;) grace for grace (John i. 16 ;) abundance of grace (Rom. v. 17 ;) grace to crown grace. (1 Pet i. 13.) Grace for life and living, and grace for death and dying. The Lord gives to the poor and unworthy ; He gives liberally, as much and as often as is needed ; and He gives with pleasure and delight.

The grace which the Lord gives will conquer unbelief, and enable us to believe His word. (Acts xviii. 27.) It will pardon all our sins, (Eph. i. 7 ;) and justify us fully and freely. (Rom iii. 24.) It will help us to perform christian duties ;

to bear all our trials with fortitude and patience, and to overcome all our foes ; it is grace to help in time of need. (Heb. iv. 16.) It inclines the heart to work for God, and assist the believer in all he undertakes for the Lord's glory. Paul could say, " The grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, for I laboured more abundantly than they all ; and yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. (1 Cor. xv. 10.) This grace is sufficient to enable us to bear a thorn in the flesh with joy, and to overcome even a special messenger of Satan, sent to buffet us. (2 Cor. xii. 9.) It is all-sufficient to enable us to do and abound in every good work (2 Cor. ix. 8 ;) and to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. (Heb. xii. 28.) It will give everlasting consolation, and inspire with a good hope (2 Thess. ii. 16 ;) and it will form the most lovely character out of the rudest material. (2 Cor. i. 12.) It brings the tidings of salvation to the ear (Titus ii. 11 ;) produces faith by which we embrace and enjoy them (Eph. ii. 8 ;) and completes and crowns the work. (Eph. ii. 5—8 ; Acts xv. 11.) It makes the poorest sinner which it embraces an heir of promise (Heb. vi. 17 ;) of salvation (Heb. i. 14 ;) and of God. (Titus iii. 7 ; Rom. viii. 17.) In a word, it has all we can want, promises all we shall ever need, gives all we ask in faith, and saves us with an everlasting salvation.

Reader, this promise is brief, but it is full of blessing; it is suited to our case, and opens a fountain of comfort for our supply. The Lord will give grace, then this should prevent our giving way to fear; what cannot grace enable us to do? What will not grace bring us safely through? If the Lord will give grace, then may we boldly ask, "Of what, or of whom shall I be afraid?" This promise should strengthen our faith, and make us confident in God, saying, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song, He also is become my salvation." It should stir us up to prayer; what can we need that is not included in the word grace?—and yet this is the very thing which Jehovah has so plainly and positively promised. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace; that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need." It should nerve us to diligence and entire consecration to God; the grace received from God should be employed for the glory of God; and if we thus employ what we receive, we may have whatsoever we ask. He says, "Work while it is called to-day." The believer feels weak and insufficient; but the God who bids him work, promises grace to enable him to perform; the precept should lead us to the promise, the promise should be taken to the throne in prayer, and the grace

received in answer to prayer should be employed in performing the precept. Once more, this promise should produce gratitude, and embolden us in the Lord's cause ; not only should we say, "I will run the way of thy commandments ;" but, "I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall continually be in my mouth."

THE NECESSARY GRACE

"You have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."—Heb. x. 36.

THE present is a state of exercise and trial ; it is not intended for rest or indulgence, but for labour and the exercise of all the christian graces. Our employment is to do the will of God ; our own will must be merged in His ; and we must from His word ascertain what He requires of us in every state, in every place, and under all circumstances ; we must learn to renounce our own will, give up our own way, and deny ourselves, because our God requires it. Having ascertained what God commands, we must do it, and do it promptly, cheerfully, heartily, universally, not choosing one part of His will and refusing the rest. We often find our own will running counter to God's will ; and our own way, just the opposite of God's way ; but when this is the case, the path of duty is plain, self must be mortified and the flesh denied. So the dispensations of providence are often very trying, and we find it more difficult to suffer the will of God in a proper spirit, than to do it ; but whether doing or suffering, we shall find grace necessary, for

nature is inefficient and very often opposed ; and grace is provided for us, and promised to us.

We have especially need of patience, by which alone we can quietly bear the burden laid upon us, or persevere in the way marked out for us. We need patience to preserve us from fretting against the Lord, or murmuring at His dealings with us ; patience will close the mouth, and cause the heart to bow down in silent sorrow, before the Lord ; it will not allow us to speak against God, but will cause us mentally to say, " I am dumb, I will not open my mouth, for it is God's will, it is the Lord's doing." We need patience to prevent apostacy ; Paul had no patience, and he lost the kingdom, and became an apostate ; only the patient will persevere. We need patience to enable us to wait the Lord's time for deliverance ; it often travels but slowly, and we have long to pray, wait, watch, and expect, before it comes ; and if there is not patience, we shall wickedly say with one, " Why should I wait for the Lord any longer ?" We need patience to suffer privations, which are often very painful and distressing ; we looked for light but beheld darkness ; we expected liberty but found a prison ; we anticipated plenty, but appear to be left in want ; and now without patience, where should we be ? We need patience to press through difficulties ; the further we go, the greater our difficulties often appear ; our cor-

ruptions within appear to grow stronger, and our troubles without to increase in number and weight ; and now, but for patience, we should certainly turn back. We need patience to travel the whole length of the wilderness, and then to enter into the promised land ; “ that having done the will of God, we may receive the promise.”

Our need of patience will appear, if you look at the number and variety of our trials ; at our sore and powerful temptations ; at our many and great disappointments ; at our painful and grievous vexations ; at the conflict within our own bosoms ; and at our liability to mistake the wise and holy design of our God and Father. He intends to prove us and try us, and show us what is in our hearts, to manifest the power and tendency of His grace, and to exhibit to all, His faithfulness and love. My brother have you this precious grace ? If so, you feel your impatience ? mourn over your want of exact conformity to the will of God ; and plead with God as the God of patience and consolation, to perfect you in this grace. Only the patient, discover and grieve over their want of patience ; and it is generally by trials, troubles, and disappointments, that the Lord draws forth and increases our patience ; as the Apostle says, “ Knowing that tribulation worketh patience ; and patience, experience ; and experience, hope ; and hope maketh not ashamed ; because the love of God is shed abroad in our

hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Hence also the exhortation of James, "My brethren, count it all joy, when ye fall into divers trials; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." And our Lord, "In your patience possess ye your souls.

Patience!—O what a grace divine!
Sent from the God of power and love,
Submissive to its Father's hand,
As through the wilds of life we rove.

By patience we serenely bear
The troubles of our mortal state,
And wait contented our discharge,
Nor think our glory comes too late.

Though we in full sensation, feel
The weight, the wounds our God ordains;
We smile amid our heaviest woes,
And triumph in our sharpest pains.

Oh, for this grace! to aid us on,
And arm with fortitude the breast,
Till, life's tumultuous voyage o'er,
We reach the shores of endless rest.

Faith into vision shall resign;
Hope shall in full fruition die,
And patience in possession end
In the bright worlds of bliss on high.

THE SECRET.

“The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.”—Ps. xxv. 14.

REAL religion, in the Old Testament, is often called “the fear of the Lord;” in the New, it is called “love.” Under the past dispensation, the saints felt more like servants; under the present they have the privilege of children. Still we fear God. The fear of the Lord includes faith in His word, hope in His mercy, and love to His gracious character; where these are experienced and possessed, there is a fear to offend God, as a child fears to offend a beloved and indulgent father; a fear to tempt God, by presuming upon His promises when neglecting His precepts, or expecting His interference when dishonouring His name; and a fear to turn a deaf ear to Him, whether He speaks in mercy or majesty, for comfort or reproof. Indeed, the ruling desire of such an one, is to commend himself to God, and enjoy His approving smile.

“The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.” A secret is a sacred deposit between two friends. And the secret of the Lord with a person is real religion, which is “the root of the

matter," and the cause of holiness, happiness, and honour. It consists in the power of God sweetly put forth, to raise the thoughts; the desires, the hopes, the affections, and the whole soul to God. It furnishes the man with what answers to the wings of the eagle, so that he mounts upward to his God, and enjoys the ascent. He learns to understand what the apostle meant, by being "raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." It includes pleasure in the presence, service and ways of God ; they are no more toilsome, tiresome, or vexatious ; but afford joy, impart comfort, and yield sacred satisfaction. It comprehends grace sanctifying, that is, fitting and setting apart the person for God's glory, both in this world, and also in that which is to come. So that the secret of the Lord which is with the righteous, consists in such a knowledge of Him, and such communications from Him, as make his ways pleasantness and his paths peace. Or it is power raising, pleasure inviting, and grace sanctifying the man ; so that he becomes a new creature, and religion becomes his element, his food, and his delight.

Those who fear the Lord, are much in secret with the Lord. They dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty. They love His company, they enjoy His presence, they prefer His society, they profit by His communications, and hold confiden-

tial intercourse with Him. He entrusts them with His secrets, treats them as His friends, opens His heart to them, and they trust Him with theirs, they tell him all they wish, what they fear, the purposes they have formed, and leave their concerns with Him.

“He will shew them His covenant.” His new covenant, which is a covenant of grace and peace. He shews them the provision which it contains; provision for their guilt, fears, weakness, foes, sorrows, and dangers; all they can want in time, or enjoy throughout eternity. A covenant ordered in all things and sure, containing all their salvation, and all they can consistently desire. He shews them the basis on which it rests, even His own grace, faithfulness, and immutability; so that it cannot be broken, or fail; for His holiness, power, and glory are involved in its permanence and completion. He shews them the objects it secures, as the glory of God, the complete salvation of the whole church, the overthrow of the kingdom of Satan, and the destruction of every foe. He shews them that it is identified with Jesus, who is called the covenant, and promised the Gentiles as such. (Is. xlii. 6; xlix. 8.) He is the messenger of the covenant. who publishes it, and is engaged for its fulfilment. He is the Mediator of the covenant, who stands between the Father and all the covenant seed, presenting His blood as an atonement for their sins, and becoming the

medium of communication between God and them. He is the Surety of the covenant also, who is to see every promise fulfilled, the provision appropriated, the people covenanted for, or given by the Father to Him, called by grace, preserved through life, meetened for glory, and raised up and presented faultless at the last day. The Lord shews this covenant by shining on His word, enlightening the mind, and leading us to feel our need of covenant blessings ; to seek them in faith, receive and enjoy them, and to know more of this covenant ; and to enjoy more of its provision, security, and pleasures.

A DESPERATE CASE.

“ There was no remedy.”—2 Chr. xxxvi. 16.

ISRAEL had polluted God's sanctuary, mocked His messengers, despised His word, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, and there was no remedy. Their case became desperate, for God would allow no more. He would use no more means to bring them to repentance, but He gave them up and brought wrath upon them to the uttermost. The disease was become inveterate; no relief could now be obtained. God rejected them, and no other physician could be found. The city was destroyed, the temple levelled with the dust, thousands of the inhabitants slain, and a vast multitude of souls lost for ever. What a fearful picture! What a lesson is set before us!

Dear friends, the subject suggests a solemn caution; it cries aloud, “Beware.” It bids us enquire and examine. Who were the people that were brought into this desperate state? They were the descendants of Abraham, the friend of God: they had been religiously educated, they had the ordinances of God, the priesthood, the written word, and the prophets. They felt assured that they were safe, for false confidence in them

was very strong ; hence the prophet complains, “ They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. Yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, “ Is not the Lord among us ? none evil can come upon us.” (Mic. iii. 10, 11.) To whom does this especially speak ? To the children of godly parents, who have taught them, prayed with them, and endeavoured to lead them in the way everlasting. To the regular attendants upon public worship, who pollute the sanctuary by their lightness, their worldliness, and their indifference. How many trifle ! How many encourage worldly thoughts ! How many show themselves indifferent to the most solemn subjects !

They, like those referred to in the narrative, despise the Lord’s word. He sends His servants to warn them of their danger ; to counsel them for their good ; to exhort them to flee and be safe ; to pronounce His threatenings against the impenitent ; and to invite all to lay down the weapons of rebellion, and receive pardon, peace, and protection. But they mock His messengers, and go one to his farm, and another to his merchandize. They make light of the gospel message, and despise the goodness and long-suffering of God, until there is no remedy. O fearful case ! O alarming situation !

But when may this be the case ?—when may it be said of a sinner that there is no remedy ? Sometimes in life and health ; for the Lord says,

of the fools who hate knowledge, "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore they shall eat of the fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own devices." Prov. i. 28—31. More particularly in the hour of death; how many presume on a death-bed repentance; and yet they have no promise of grace at that hour, they have but little ground to hope for acceptance then. But if deprived of reason by fever, the paralyzing stroke, or apoplexy, then indeed it is clearly seen that there is no remedy. And, oh, to be banished from time into eternity with a load of unpardoned sin upon the conscience, to suffer the just wrath of God for ever, how terrible is this! Then comes the judgment, but there is no remedy; for impartial Justice sits upon the throne, and the record of the man's thoughts, words, and actions, is exposed; and in characters which cannot be erased, is written, "He trifled with my mercy, insulted my justice, dared my power, denied my right, rejected my gospel, and refused my grace." O fearful case!—there is no remedy!

In vain for mercy now they cry,
In lakes of liquid fire they lie:
There on the flaming billows tost,
For ever—oh, for ever lost!

THE ONE MEDIATOR.

“ There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”—1 Tim. ii. 5.

THE mediation of Christ is the glory of the gospel: and no one hath seen the glory of the method of grace, who hath not distinctly, clearly, and spiritually seen the nature of the mediation of Jesus. God and man are by nature separated; nor can they be reconciled or united but by a Mediator. The cause of this separation is sin. The sin of man is rebellion against the just authority of God. It is deep-rooted, cruel, and wicked enmity against God. It is moral uncleanness, in consequence of which he cannot be admitted into the presence of God. It aims at nothing less than the very being of God; for if God were but clearly seen, and the sinner had the power, he would chase the Most High out of all the worlds He has created, and deprive Him of His self-existence and very being. The character of man is that of the enemy of God, the avowed, determined, and implacable enemy of God; and his enmity is so deep and dreadful, that nothing short of the divine power and influence of the Holy Spirit can subdue it, nothing but a new creation can change his character. How then can such a being, in such a state, be admitted into the presence of God?—of God,

whose justice demands that the rights of the divine nature be maintained, and the crimes of the sinner be punished ; whose holiness is like a burning, glowing fire, and will not, cannot, allow any thing impure to approach it ; whose truth is immutable as His throne, and will not rescind or falsify a threatening ; and whose power makes earth to tremble, and the perpetual hills to bow ? How can such a God, and such creatures, meet and embrace, and love each other ? Only through a Mediator, one who can lay his hand upon both.

The Mediator required must be one who can approach to and treat with God for man ; whose dignity, glory, and majesty, are such, that it shall be no dishonour to Jehovah to admit him to His council, and enter into terms with him for man's redemption. The Mediator must be one who has ability to prevail with and reconcile men ; he must have power to subdue the stubborn will, cleanse the filthy nature, and bring the rebel as a humble suppliant to the divine throne. He must be willing to undertake this great and arduous work, and to go through with it, let it cost what it may of toil, suffering, and power. He must also be acceptable to both parties : God must approve of him and be satisfied with him ; and man must acquiesce in his appointment, office, and work. He must be able to meet and fulfil all the conditions of the covenant, obeying the precepts of the law, suffering its dreadful penalty,

and new-creating the rebel man. He must therefore be God ; or how can he treat with God, undertake for millions of sinners, and deliberately engage in such an awful work ? If he is not God, he is infinitely beneath God ; for there is an infinite distance between God and the most exalted creature. He must also be man, and perfect man, without spot, or stain of sin ; or how could He obey the law in His life, and suffer its penalty in His death ? Jesus is both God and man. God by nature, and man by choice : the God-man, therefore the Mediator.

His work was first to lay a foundation for bringing God and man together upon honourable principles,—this He did by His obedience and death ; then actually to bring the parties together into friendship and agreement—this He doth by His gospel and Holy Spirit : then to keep the parties together, in peace and love—and this He doth by his intercession, constantly pleading His blood for sinners in the holiest, and sending down the Holy Spirit to sanctify, teach and guide them. As Mediator, He made peace, He proclaims peace, He imparts peace, He maintains peace, and will introduce His people into perfect and eternal peace. He stands between God and man as Intercessor with God, as Advocate for them : and He is the only medium of access to God ; no sinner can approach God with acceptance but through Him, as the medium of communion with God, God can-

not have fellowship with us, but through Him ; as the medium of sympathy, He unites God and man so closely, so tenderly, that every groan touches Him, every sigh touches Him, every pain touches Him, and in all our afflictions, He is afflicted. Wonderful union ! Amazing mystery ! That God and man should become one, through Jesus. The rebel and the Sovereign one ! The sinner, and the Holiest one ! But so it is, and Jesus will be the medium of glory ; He is so now to the spirits of the just made perfect, and He will be so to us in the separate state, and in ultimate glory for ever. There is *one Mediator*, and but ONE ; we need no more.

The Mediator's glorious name,
My soul, with all thy powers proclaim,
Who did in covenant agree,
To suffer, bleed, and die for me.

See wisdom, justice, truth, and grace,
Shine in the Mediator's face ;
Jehovah's just, yet justifies
All that to Christ for refuge flies.

In Him, our medium of access,
We've pardon, rest and righteousness ;
The Father draws, the Spirit seals,
And everlasting life reveals.

Thus all who in the Lord believe,
The witness in their souls receive ;
Through grace are made for glory meet,
And stand in Christ their Head complete.

THE WEALTHY FAMILY.

“ There is no want to them that fear Him.”—
Ps. xxxiv. 9.

THOSE are not the wealthy who appear to be so, or who boast of being so ; the sinner must be poor. He has no God to comfort him ; no Saviour to deliver him ; no Guide to conduct him ; no Advocate to plead for him ; no inward peace to support him ; no title to heaven to animate him. He is poor. He is in want. He will want confidence and comfort in death ; a wedding garment, in which to appear before God ; and a comfortable home throughout eternity. Every sinner is poor : his resources will soon be exhausted, and he will find himself “ wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” They may have the show of property, but not the reality ; this belongs to another family.

The Lord’s people all fear him ; that is, they fear to offend Him, and desire above all things to please Him : and though they appear poor, they are really rich. God hath provided all good things for them, and He giveth all good things to them. They have a solid peace, flowing from a knowledge of acceptance with God, through the blood of Jesus. They have a joyful hope, which

blooms with immortality. They are assured of strength equal to their day ; and of sanctifying grace to make all their troubles work their good. They are content with God's wise and holy appointments ; and godliness with contentment is a good fortune. They acquiesce in the will of God ; and are often filled with joy which flows from his presence. They obtain victory over the temptations presented to ensnare them ; and live above the world, which would allure and beguile them. They are sure of support in death ; they look forward to a joyful resurrection ; and anticipate heaven as their portion for ever.

There is no want to them, for all they can need is promised : and every promise is confirmed by the blood of Jesus. Jehovah is theirs with all He is or has ; His power is their support—His wisdom their guide—His fulness their fortune—His mercy their friend—and His love their heaven. "Happy are the people which are in such a case." But all the Lord's people are in this case, and therefore they are happy. Just think of having God for your present, constant, eternal friend : π^c having the wealth of Deity to supply and satisfy you. But if you fear God, this is the case. No truth is more clearly revealed ; no fact is more powerfully confirmed ; no subject is more rich with consolation. Strength may be exhausted, health may decline, courage may fail, riches may flee, friends may forsake, enemies may increase,

all circumstances may change ; “ but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.” Sweet promise of a faithful God ! Here, pilgrim, is thy staff ; take it and travel home. Here, saint, is thy cordial ; drink and forget thy misery Here, believer, is thy fortune ; take it and live upon it, while a resident below. Here, fearful soul, is thy antidote ; use it to dispel thy fears and cheer thy fainting heart. God hath said, “ The young lions may lack and suffer hunger ; but there is no want to them that fear Him.” Here is wealth ! Here is comfort ! Here is all we can need for life or death, time or eternity !

No more, my soul, let unbelief
Thy joy and peace devour ;
Jehovah-jireh sends relief
For every trying hour.

Dangers stand thick through all my way,
And foes on every side ;
Yet all is well—I'll watch and pray,
Jehovah will provide.

My strength may fail, my wants increase,
While sorrow swells its tide ;
But God, my God, will never cease
To love me, and provide.

All grace in Christ for Abraham's seed
And endless bliss beside ;
Jehovah-jireh has decreed
For ever to provide.

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THE REMEDY FOR A TROUBLED HEART.

“Let not your heart be troubled : ye believe in God, believe also in me.”—John xiv. 1.

WE often trouble ourselves ; and at other times, allow our hearts to be tossed about like the waves of the sea, without any real cause. Our Saviour forbids it. He forbids it in tender love. He forbids it because it is injurious. Inward commotion, or confusion, such as is referred to in the text, unfits us for social duties, religious exercises, and usefulness in the church of God. It lays us open to temptations, and fosters unbelief and anxiety. Our Lord would have us calm, patient, and orderly ; therefore He says, “Let not your heart be troubled.”

He prescribes a remedy for heart trouble, or inward commotion : “Believe in God.” Believe in God as your Father, as loving you, acting for you, and rejoicing in your welfare : see Him, ordering all events with consummate wisdom ; overruling all with infinite skill ; and sanctifying all to your welfare by His sovereign grace. There is no room for chance, for His government is perfect ; there can be no unkindness, for His love is infinite ; all will be directed right, for He personally super-

intends every movement. The floating of the atom, the rolling of the sea, and all the movements of mind, are alike under His control and direction; "He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." "Believe also in me." Believe that I sympathise with you; feel the deepest interest in your welfare; and never withdraw my eye or heart from you for one moment. Believe that I will support you in every place, and under every trial; that my arm shall be stretched out for you, to lean upon, as you come up out of the wilderness: and that I will overturn all the designs of your foes against you. Believe that I will fill my characters in your experience, as your Saviour, Brother, Friend; that I will save to the uttermost, shew a brother's love, and stand by you as a firm friend in every distress. Believe that I will fulfil my word to you; every promise, the largest, the kindest; "for heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled."

"Let not your heart therefore be troubled." "It does not become you. It is injurious to you. It dishonours me. It can do no good. Therefore watch against it, as against a foe; pray against it, that you may have grace to overcome it; strive against it, for it is your duty. Always view it as an evil, as an evil which it is possible to overcome: as inconsistent with your profession, as injurious to your soul, as dishonouring to your

God." There is no cause for you to be troubled, for your God performs all things for you; it is inconsistent for you to be troubled, for your Saviour has bequeathed you His peace; it is sinful for you to be troubled, for you are bidden to cast all your care upon the Lord, and are assured that He careth for you. All your commotion will not change the colour of a hair, will not weaken the power of one foe, will not lighten a single burden; it is therefore folly as well as sin. The remedy is before you. It was prescribed by the great Physician; it has proved efficacious in innumerable instances; it is just suited to you, it was intended for you; will you use it and prove its salutary effect? Remember Jesus, that Jesus who lived for you, laboured for you, suffered for you, died for you, rose for you, and is now in heaven pleading for you, says, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me."

Be still, my heart;—these anxious cares,
To thee are burdens, thorns, and snares;
They cast dishonour on thy Lord,
And contradict his precious word.

Did ever trouble yet befall
And He refuse to hear thy call?
And Has he not His promise past,
That thou shalt overcome at last?

He who has help'd me hitherto,
Will help me all my journey through,
And give me daily cause to raise
New Ebenezers to His praise.

THE SAVIOUR'S WARNING.

“Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with the cares of this life.”—Luke xxi. 34.

HERE our beloved Saviour cautions us against a common evil, the cares of this life ; or being too anxious to amass wealth, or respecting temporal things. This is a snare into which many fall, an evil by which many are drowned in destruction and perdition. When are we too anxious about temporal things? When we abridge the necessary hours of rest. When we deprive ourselves of time for private devotion. When we neglect family duties, and do not make the salvation of our domestics the principal end. When we give up the ordinances of the Lord's house, and let the world have the time once devoted to the Saviour. When the heart is overcharged, and we cannot retain God's word, are unfitted for holy meditation, and feel tied and bound to the things of time.

What leads to this state? The love of present things, which arises very much from setting a false value upon them. The fear of poverty, as if poverty were worse than sin, and was more to be dreaded than the frown of God. A desire for independence, that we may feel that we are our

own carvers ; but this is an improper feeling, an unholy desire. Happiness is in childlike dependance on God ; and the more dependant, if faith be lively, the more happy. Falling in with temptations : Satan can so show us the glory of the world as to deceive us ; and he often persuades even the Lord's people, that they will find the world what no one ever did. Presuming on our own powers or strength : as if we fancied that we were wiser and stronger than others ; and therefore more capable of managing earthly things. But we are always in danger when we begin to fancy, that though others have fallen, yet, though in the same place, and surrounded by the same temptations, we never shall. How necessary is that command, "Love not the world, nor *the things that are in the world* ; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

The anxious are in danger, the whole of them ; though some more than others. All are liable to be overcome. The temptations are peculiarly strong, and multitudes have been overcome by them. The heart is dreadfully deceitful, and is sure to beguile us ; let us, therefore, "TAKE HEED." Without caution, we shall not watch ; unless we watch we shall not pray ; and unless we pray, we may not expect to be kept. Beware, for if the heart be overcharged with the cares of this life, however spiritual we may have been, it will soon impoverish the soul ; our graces will wither, our

evidences become dim and questionable, and the fervour of our devotion will die. It will assist Satan ; by the thorns of worldly cares he chokes the word, and it becomes unfruitful. It will perhaps injure bodily health, and even abridge our days. It will make sad work for repentance, and our souls will be filled with gloom, when they ought to be rejoicing in God. This caution of our dear Lord is kind, and it is as necessary as it is kind.

Take heed, for the day is coming ; the day of death will soon be here,—it may be much nearer than we expect ; and if it find our hearts overcharged with the cares of this life, it will find us unfit for heaven. The day when Jesus will appear the second time, without sin unto salvation, will soon be here ; and then, unless our lamps are trimmed, our loins girded, our lights burning, and we have oil in our vessels, there is no going in with Him into the marriage. My friend, if that day should come upon you unawares, if it should find you unready ! It is possible. It must be a very painful thing, for death to come, or for Jesus to come and find us not ready, after all his cautions, warnings, and exhortations. The cares of this life render many inattentive to the most important duties ; to despise the invaluable promises of God ; and to mistake the design of this life, which is to prepare for another, a better, an eternal state of existence.

THE PRESCRIPTION.

“ *This is for your health.*”—Acts xxvii. 34.

BODILY health is a great blessing, and should not be trifled with ; but all means likely to preserve it should be attended to. To this the Apostle refers, and recommends the ship's company to take some meat, because it was for their health. Spiritual health is an invaluable blessing, and should be more carefully attended to. Unless the graces of the Spirit are in vigorous exercise, and the duties of religion are our delight, we are not in health ; there is some sickness, and we need the physician's care. To preserve health where it is, or restore it where it is not, attend to the following prescription. It is valuable ; it is important : because “ it is for your health.”

First, you must take *exercise* : and I recommend that you *walk* daily in the paradise of God's word : that you *work* in the vineyard of God's church : that you *bathe* in the fountain of redeeming blood : that you keep up *fellowship* with lively christians : and that you *exercise all the graces* of the Spirit. Attend particularly to these points, for, “ it is for your health.”

Second, pay attention to your *diet* : let your *food* be the best ; the bread of life and the living

waters of salvation are recommended ; they satisfy and sanctify ; they make healthy and keep healthy : be sure you take *sufficient* ; a little will preserve life, but much is necessary to health : take your food *regularly*, for regularity is important ; you cannot “ prosper and be in health ” unless you live upon Christ, and live upon Him every day.

Third, as to your *medicine* : it is made up of the bitter herbs of disappointment, losses, crosses, temptations, bereavements, troubles and trials of various sorts ; it is very unpleasant, but very profitable ; unless taken, and taken pretty freely, you will be laid up with idleness, carelessness, anxiety, pride, or selfishness ; but this medicine is intended to prevent or remove these evils. Your heavenly Father will *prepare* it : divine Providence will *present* it : you are to *beg* the divine blessing upon it : *take it* and *expect* benefit from it. Do not despise your medicine, for “ it is for your health.”

Fourth, we prescribe *tranquillity* : you cannot be healthy, unless you preserve tranquillity of mind ; in order to which, *live in peace with God*, as a loving child with a kind and tender Father ; cast all your cares upon Him, daily confess your sins before Him, and get a renewed manifestation of His pardoning love : *be content with your lot*, it is appointed for you by infinite wisdom and love ; it is the very best that can be, and this you will

see and confess by-and-bye: *trust the promises and providence of God* for the future ; live by the day ; take no anxious thought for the morrow, but leave the future with the Lord, for “ it is for your health.”

Believer, God designs to preserve or restore thy spiritual health in all He does. Does He require you to obey His wise, His holy, His flesh-displeasing precepts ? “ It is for your health.” Does He afflict you ? “ It is for your health.” Does He try you in your temporal circumstances ? “ It is for your health.” Does He bereave you of your beloved relatives and friends ? Even “ this is for your health.” The cup is bitter, but the design is gracious ; the draught is nauseous, but the effect is sweet. “ All things work together for good, to them that love God, and are the called according to His purpose.” If we use much exercise, pay strict attention to our diet, and live in holy tranquillity, we shall not want much medicine ; but if we become inactive, feed upon the vanities of time, and are anxious and troubled about many things, we shall often need a regular course of medicine ; and as sure as we need it we shall have it : and if we complain or repine, our heavenly Father will silence us, by pointing to our folly and asking, “ Hast thou not procured this unto thyself ?”

THE SINCERITY OF LOVE.

“To prove the sincerity of your love.”—2 Cor. viii. 8.

TRUE love is always active and benevolent. It is so in nature ;—see the mother with her child, mark the fond affection of the little one reciprocating a mother’s kindness. See it in all the connections and relationships of life ; and see it much more in the church of Jesus Christ. Faith produces love ; and love always acts towards God in adoring His perfections, praising His name, consecrating the entire person to His service, and making benevolent communications to His cause. It acts towards the saints, in preferring them to all other, uniting with them in holy fellowship, and working with them to promote the Lord’s cause. It acts toward sinners, in pitying them, pleading for them, and using means for their recovery.

Love is the bond of society, and the chief ornament of our nature. God, as the Governor, requires it ; as a Sovereign, He promises it ; and as a Covenant God, by His Spirit He produces it. When the Spirit comes to produce love in our hearts, He convinces us that we have it not ; He gives us to see its beauty and excellency ; then

desire to possess and enjoy it springs up ; then we seek it by earnest, fervent prayer ; and by the gospel it is produced. Here the love of God to us is manifested, pardon is presented, provision for all our wants is promised, the most lovely prospects are unfolded, and the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts, love to God, to saints, to all, springs up. The cross especially draws forth our love ; sameness of nature causes it to fix on the saints ; and while pursuing the same objects, we feel our love to each other increase and strengthen. But fellowship with God and His people, is that which more particularly sustains and increases our love one towards another.

Love, Christian love, professes to prefer Christ and His cause to every thing besides ; to submit to His authority and acquiesce in His will ; to approve of and obey all His commands, to choose and delight in His saints ; to sympathise with and relieve suffering believers ; and to be ready to every good work.

The proof of love is required. The proof of its sincerity, its purity, and its strength. God requires proof ; and for this end His commands are given and His ordinances appointed. " This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." The church requires proof ; hence her applications for assistance and the display of sympathy. Sinners require proof ; and strong proof too ; and they are watching us, to see if we

act as we profess, and walk according to our rule. Circumstances will demand proof; as when the good Samaritan saw the poor Jew bleeding, gasping, and ready to die; he gave proof that he loved his neighbour by going to him and rendering him assistance; but the priest and Levite manifested that their pretensions to love were mere hypocrisy. So when the churches in Judea were tried with poverty, it proved the love of the Gentiles who sent them relief. And this will account for some things which occur at present. Why are some saints you know, poor, very poor? To prove the sincerity of your love, to see whether your love is only in word, or whether you will assist them as you should. Why are some believers near you sick, and sick for so long a time? Probably to prove the sincerity of your love, whether you will visit, comfort, and relieve them or no. Why does the cause of God need and call for support from us? To prove the sincerity of our love; and the proof of our love should be evident, so evident as to leave no room for doubt; it should be proved by self-denying labours, expensive sympathies, and prompt and cheerful assistance. Love, if felt, should be shewn. Love, if possessed, will appear; it will appear in visiting the sick, teaching the young, defending the oppressed, relieving the poor, and working to assist the Lord's cause. Faith should be crowned with love, and love with convincing proofs.

THE LORD'S DAY.

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's-day."—
Rev. i. 10.

THE Lord has given us six days to employ for ourselves, and He claims the seventh for Himself. He has a right to the whole, but He only bids us set apart one day in the seven. The day He has chosen under the present dispensation, is the first of the week; the day on which Jesus arose from the dead, and viewed His finished work with satisfaction and delight. On the day before, there was a dead Christ and a dead Sabbath; but now Christ is risen, and the first day is set apart for His praise. On this day the Holy Spirit descended, for the day of Pentecost was the first day of the week; now the church received the fulness of the Spirit, and He became the witness, the seal, and confirmation of the work and mission of Jesus. On this day the disciples met together to break bread, and attend to all the other ordinances which Jesus had appointed; and still the saints met to worship and rejoice.

Its title is "THE LORD'S DAY." It is devoted to Him by His people; on this day they rest from labour, meditate on His perfect work, meet in His

house, join in prayer and praise, listen to the preaching of His word, and unite to further His cause. He entirely approves of their devoting the day to Him, and He meets with them, manifests Himself to them, and blesses them as their circumstances may require. This day is hated by Satan above all the days of the week, because on this day His kingdom is weakened, Jesus is glorified, and His devices are exposed. Too many abuse this day, and spend it in idleness, gluttony, worldly pleasure, and various other sins; and even many professors are not sufficiently concerned to consecrate it wholly to the service of God. It should be marked by seriousness, by prayerfulness, by reading and meditating on God's holy word, by regular and early attendance on the means of grace, and by obedience to the Saviour's various commands. The great object of the day is to glorify Jesus, to exalt and extol Him, "to shew forth the honor of His name, and to make His praise glorious;" and in so doing the believer must be benefited and blessed.

John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day. This is a very great privilege, and should be diligently sought by us; for only then can we keep the Lord's day in the spirit of liberty, peace, and love. To be in the Spirit, is to be filled with His influences and to feel surrounded by His presence; to be under His control, direction, and blessing. This always makes us prayerful and grateful;

it enables us to enjoy duty, and profit under the word ; it detaches us from the world and dedicates us to God ; and it produces cheerful, loving obedience. We run in the way of God's commandments, and find His service perfect freedom. Then the Sabbath is a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable ; and we find rest in His ordinances, peace in His presence, and rejoice in His full salvation.

Reader, are you a Christian ? Do you admit the propriety of the Lord having one day for Himself ? Do you believe that He has set apart the first day of the week for His service and glory ? Then be honest, and let the Lord have His day. Do not rob Him of any part of it. Alas ! how many do ? By lying later in bed, by napping after dinner, and by allowing the mind to sink into a listless state, they rob God of more than half His day. Is this honest ? Do you do so on your own days ? Would you, could you, approve of your servant doing so on any day of the week ? You know you could not ; then do not so unto your God, but give Him a whole day, a long day, and prize it above all the seven. Be thankful for such an institution ; it is an unspeakable mercy, the source of many blessings. Do not legalise it and make it a day of gloom and mental drudgery ; it should be a cheerful day, for Jesus has finished His work, is gone into heaven, and bids us rejoice in His conquests

and triumphs : do not pervert it by lightness, indifference, and licentiousness, for it is the Lord's holy day. His own DAY. Anticipate its anti-type, the eternal Lord's day ; which is to be spent in His presence, service, and praise. Constantly seek to be in the Spirit on the first day of the week, or you will never rightly use it or enjoy it ; the Spirit alone can enable you to enter into its design, and rightly employ its hours.

How welcome to the saints, when prest
With six day's noise, and care, and toil,
Is the returning day of rest,
Which hides them from the world awhile.

Now, from the throng withdrawn away,
They seem to breathe a different air ;
Composed and softened by the day,
All things another aspect wear.

How happy if their lot is cast
Where statedly the gospel sounds !
The word is honey to their taste,
Renews their strength and heals their wounds

With joy they hasten to the place
Where they their Saviour oft have met ;
And while they feast upon His grace,
Their burdens and their griefs forget.

This favour'd lot, dear friend, is ours ;
May we the privilege improve,
And find these consecrated hours
Sweet earnest of the joys above.

PUBLIC WORSHIP

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.”—Heb. x. 25.

THE public worship of God is of divine appointment, and is intended to benefit the Lord's people, to be the means of the conversion of sinners, and to glorify God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Believers should meet to pray and praise together; to preach and hear together; to attend to the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, to administer discipline, and to receive others into fellowship. The saints should meet often, always on the Lord's day, except unavoidably prevented, and as often as they conveniently can on other days. The ordinances are means of grace, and we receive grace in attending upon them; they are to revive, strengthen, encourage, and reprove us, and we find they often do so. We cannot neglect the ordinances without being serious losers; or attend them in a proper spirit without being sensibly benefited. The Lord is always present in the assembly of the saints, and present on purpose to bless them. Our attendance should be REGULAR, never omitting if we can possibly be present; it should always be EARLY, never coming in late if it can by any means be avoided. Every believer should be in the place of meeting

a few minutes before the service commences, that there may be time to compose the mind, and offer up a short prayer for the Lord's presence and blessing. Those who habituate themselves to coming late, do not consider that they disturb the devotion of others, pain the preacher's mind, distract the attention of the congregation, and dishonour the Lord, who has been there from the commencement.

Let us not neglect the means, or attend to them in a cold, formal, lifeless manner; but let us bear in mind that we go to meet the Lord, to perform a solemn duty, to enjoy a delightful privilege, and to honour the Lord Jesus Christ. Many practically despise the means of grace: their attendance is occasional, instead of regular; late, instead of early; formal, instead of lively and zealous. This arises from the coldness of the affections, the worldliness of the mind, and the influence of temptation on the spirit. Nothing is easier than to frame excuses for neglecting public worship, nor are many things more difficult than to give satisfactory reasons for so doing.

Reader, if tempted to neglect the public worship of God, remember the honour of Jesus is involved in it; the command of God and the example of the saint, make it incumbent upon thee. If thou art at all concerned for the credit of the Saviour's cause, for the comfort of the minister and members of the church, for your own spiritual

welfare, or for the consistency of your conduct, have a place in the Lord's house which you can call your own, and be sure you fill it regularly, early, and with becoming seriousness. The promises of God, the practice of primitive times, and the happy experience of the saints, combine to urge thee to a diligent attention to this duty. Our Apostle adds the coming of "the day," the near approach of the Lord Jesus ; it will be soon, sudden, and solemn : and we ought to be quite prepared for it, come when it may. But if the lamp of our profession is not burning brightly, if the vessel of our hearts is not well furnished with the oil of grace, if our loins are not girded with truth, if we are not found watching in the Lord's ways, how can we be said to be ready ? And are we likely to be in such a holy, happy state, if we live in the neglect of the ordinances of our God ? Surely no. Let us, therefore, exhort one another to this duty ; and let us do so the more earnestly affectionately, and frequently, as we see the day approaching. In this respect let us not suffer sin upon a brother, without kindly warning, and affectionately exhorting him to a more consistent course. Let us attend to all the ordinances of God, and use all the means of grace, that we may all be found of Jesus in peace, without spot and blameless, at His appearing ; for if we are negligent, worldly-minded, and forsaking the right ways of the Lord, this cannot be the case.

FAMILY PRAYER.

“Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the families that call not on thy name.”—Jer. x. 25.

FAMILY prayer is a most important means of grace, and has often proved one of the greatest blessings which a family could enjoy. It is not enough that we pray as private individuals in our closets; we must honour God in our families. Twice in the day if we can, at least once, every family where Jesus is professed should be called to bow before the Lord together. Parents and children, master and servants, should meet before the Lord their maker. The head of the family should lead the devotions if present, and his wife should be absent. Family prayer should never be omitted if there be one of the family at home who can call upon God; even if the language be broken, and the time occupied be very brief. The gift of prayer always grows by use, and smallness of gift is no lawful excuse for omitting family prayer. If we cannot pray eloquently, we may pray earnestly, which is much better; if our language does not flow freely, we need not be long and tedious. Prevailing prayers are often short prayers.

Family devotions should generally be short, especially where there are young children. A short portion of God's holy word should be read; and it has often been found profitable to read a few striking remarks on some spiritual subject, by an approved author. If those present can sing, a few verses of praise greatly enliven the service; if not, a short prayer, being a direct address to Jehovah, offered with feeling and fervour, under a sense of the divine presence, is very edifying and refreshing. God approves, an enlightened conscience commends, and all are benefited. Family prayer will prevent much sin, as well as do much good. It keeps up a remembrance of the divine presence, it brings important truths before the mind, it teaches the prayerless what prayer is, it leads children and servants to think, and brings down the blessing of God upon the house. We are to pray with *all prayer* and supplication in the Spirit; but this we cannot do if family prayer is neglected. We are to pray *every where*, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting; this cannot be observed, if we do not pray in our families. He who would excuse himself from family prayer, should expect to be excused from family blessings.

Reader, have you family prayer in your house? If not, allow me to ask, do you profess to be a Christian? Have you considered the solemn passage at the head of these remarks? If God is to

pour out his fury upon the families which call not upon his name, and you have not family prayer, how can your family escape? You ought to own God in your house, and daily should you acknowledge your dependance upon Him, and obligation to Him. All your domestic comforts, all your temporal mercies, and all your spiritual privileges, flow from His love and grace; and will you daily as a family receive, and never as a family praise? The heathens have their household gods; and will not you have your family altar? Shall they honour idols of wood and stone, and must it be said of you, "The God in whose hands thy breath is, hast thou not glorified?" An old divine says, "A family without prayer is like a house without a roof, opened and exposed to all the storms of heaven." Again, "Family prayer bolts the door against danger at night, and opens it for the admission of mercies in the morning." Private prayer was never intended to set aside family prayer, nor should family prayer be made an excuse for the neglect of private. The one is for the person, the other for the household. Both are necessary, and properly conducted both are means of blessing.

To God, most worthy to be praised,
Be our domestic altars raised;
Who, Lord of heaven, scorns not to dwell
With saints in their obscurest cell.

APOSTOLIC COUNSEL.

“ Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God ”—1 Cor. vii. 24.

EXTERNAL circumstances and human distinctions are of small consequence to the Christian: for the religion he professes is able to make him useful and happy any where, and every where. Whether master or servant, sovereign or subject, the believer need not be much concerned; for in spiritual things all are equal. All have the same spiritual privileges, all are alike the sons of God, and the brethren of the Lord Jesus; all are accepted of God, and have access to Him on a throne of grace; every one is promised strength equal to his day, and grace according to his station; and all have the same glowing prospects opened before them.

Every condition has its peculiar trials and temptations; the wealthy are not exempt, nor have the poor an undue share; the master is tried in his station, as well as the servant in his. The poor are often the happiest, being rich in faith, fervent in prayer, and rejoicing in hope; their situation being low is more sheltered, and they find the gospel of Jesus peculiarly suited to them. Present distinctions will not last long; death, the

great leveller, will soon pass by, and lay all alike in the dust ; and then it will not much matter whether we were masters or servants ; the only point of importance will be were we holy and useful, and accordingly will every one “ have praise of God.”

The grand object to be kept in view by us all, is abiding with God as His children, walking with Him like Enoch did ; and if we do so we shall realize His presence, exercise faith in His word, keep up daily intercourse with Him on His throne, look not so much at present things as future, and expect Him to ratify His word in our experience. This will bring joy in sorrow, strength in weakness, light in darkness, and inspire with immortal hope. It will enable us to adorn the gospel, convince the gainsayers, and glorify our heavenly Father. More depends on the state of the mind than on any circumstances in which we can be placed ; therefore, let not the wealthy be high-minded, but fear ; let not the learned be proud, but humble ; let not the poor be depressed, but hopeful ; let not the illiterate despond, but look for divine teaching. Let no one be anxious or hasty to exchange situations ; we know what are our trials in our present, but we know not what they may be in another. Let us all endeavour, where Providence placed us, to “ abide with God.”

This counsel reproves many rash speculating professors ; dissatisfied with their present condi-

tion, determined to rise rapidly, they run before providence, and move without the approbation of God ; and so fall “into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.” It is calculated to check the murmuring and repining of others ; remember, friend, you are where God in his providence has placed you ; in your present situation the Lord can make you useful and happy ; therefore be more concerned for grace, than for a change of situation. If you move without God, you may have to repent of it as Lot did ; but if you aim to glorify God where you are, you cannot be neglected, or have cause to be distressed. “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” Therefore, “Be content with such things as ye have, for God hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” A restless spirit is not to be indulged, but mortified ; if it is encouraged, it will become unmanageable, and cause us bitter sorrow ; but if it is subdued by discipline and grace, it will become settled and composed. Complaining does not become a Christian, nor is dissatisfaction consistent with our principles. We know not what is best for us here : Lazarus was better off than Dives ; for he was preparing for glory, while the rich man was ripening for perdition.

PROFITABLE REFLECTION.

“ Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.”—Ezek. xxxvi. 31.

WHEN the Lord's people are gathered from among the ungodly, are cleansed from their sins, are sanctified in their natures, are saved from their foes, are restored from their backslidings, and enjoy the privileges of the new covenant, they are led to reflect upon the past. They review the days of their unregeneracy with sorrow, and gratitude to God for His grace ; but they reflect on their own evil ways since united to Jesus, with shame and self-abhorrence. This promise is fulfilled in every restored backslider.

“ Ye shall remember your own *evil ways*.” They were just opposed to God's ways, to our own profession, and to what may have been justly expected from us. They were from an evil principle, unbelief ; they were to an evil end, the gratification of the flesh ; they were of an evil character, and the effect of listening to an evil monitor, even Satan. Our doings were not good, but equally opposed to God's good law, and the Sa-

viour's glorious gospel. They were unholy, unrighteous, and injurious to God and man. Ye shall *remember*, reflect seriously, as the Church did, when she said, "Let us *search* and *try* our ways, and turn again to the Lord." Let us examine our ways thoroughly, and bring them to the touch-stone of the Lord's word for trial. Ye shall reflect painfully, as Peter did: "And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, and he went out and wept bitterly." Ye shall reflect frequently, as David did, who said, "My sin is ever before me."

"Ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations." No man loathes himself by nature; but when a believer reflects upon his backslidings from his God, when he sees his sins in the light of God's countenance, when he beholds mercy rejoicing against judgment in his own case, like Job he exclaims, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." He feels deeply displeased with his folly—he judges himself totally unworthy the notice of his God—he groans in his spirit under the pressure he feels—he is wounded in his heart by the review of his folly—he is disgusted with himself for his inexcusable conduct; and exclaims, "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man." Thus pride is destroyed, humility is drawn forth, penitence is produced, self is condemned, and God is justified in ~~using~~ the severest means.

“Ye shall loathe yourselves,” for the past shall be made distinctly to pass in review before you ; ye shall clearly discover the nature and character of your transgression ; ye shall turn with sorrow and disgust from yourselves to your injured and insulted Lord ; ye shall feel as though you could never forgive yourselves for the course you have pursued ; ye shall pass sentence on yourselves, and frankly confess your crime was abominable.

Such is the effect of mercy on the pardoned sinner, and restored backslider. Reader, has mercy had this effect on you ? Or, are you pleased with yourself, thinking lightly of your sin ? Retire to Calvary, sit down before the cross of Jesus ; and in the light of redeeming mercy, review and reflect upon your past course and conduct. Look back, look within, and then look up ; see what your life has been, a course of sin ; see what sin is, an evil and bitter thing ; see what your sins have done, even crucified the Lord of glory ; and can you do otherwise than loathe yourself in your own sight, for all your iniquities and for all your abominations ?

Great God, I wonder and adore !

Thy grace is all divine ;

Oh, keep me, that I sin no more,

Against such love as thine.

THE HUSBAND'S EXAMPLE.

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it.”—
Ephes. v. 25.

THIS language is especially addressed to Christians ; the Holy Spirit speaks on the wife's behalf. The husband and his wife are one. The union is most intimate and important, and it is for life ; it should therefore be formed with much prayer, prudence, and reflection ; but being formed, each party should strive to make it a means of blessing to the other, by closely attending to the precepts of Holy Scripture. No godly man should, under any pretence, marry an ungodly wife ; for it is impossible to obey the precepts of the gospel, under such circumstances. The husband is to love his wife, not merely for her beauty, her amiable temper, or her attention to him ; but he is to love her for Christ's sake, as a part of His mystical body, as dear to His heart, and appointed to reign with Him in glory.

The husband will never love his wife as he should, except he views her in Christ, considers her as one with Christ, and remembers that Jesus takes unkindness shewn to her, as shewn to himself. The wife must be loved not only for her own sake, not merely as a woman ; but for the sake of Christ, who redeemed her by His blood ?

who loves her with an infinite love, and who is jealous of any slight shewn or unkindness manifested to her. Every husband who professes to be a Christian, should view his wife as in Christ ; and remember that Jesus says,—speaking of His saints, “ He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of His eye.” Acting thus, he would be better able to bear with her infirmities and imperfections ; and would be led to plead for her more earnestly with her God. Viewing her as Christ’s, and also as his own flesh, he would always have a garment at hand to cast over her faults, and his love would cover the multitude of sins. A perfect wife is not to be expected.

The husband should be the representative of Christ to his wife, loving her as Christ loves His church. Oh, what tenderness, what gentleness, what kindness, what sympathy, what condescension should be shewn ! If Jesus is to be the husband’s pattern, if the husband endeavours to imitate Him, how happy will the wife be made—how comfortable will the house become—how honourable will the marriage state appear ! Jesus so loved the church as to give Himself for her, even when she was most unlovely ; and He so loves her as to give her all He has, even His glory. He never takes His eye from off her, He bears with her, pleads with His Father for her, sympathises with her in every affliction, and will not allow any thing to alienate His affections from her

There is not a sigh escapes her, but it touches His heart ; nor is a pain felt by her, but it enters His bosom.

Husbands, see your pattern. Look at the meekness, gentleness, forbearance, and tender love of Jesus, and see how you ought to act toward the wife of your bosom. Look at your wife, and look at His Church ; and say, Is it possible for your wife to be as fickle, as false, as provoking, as ungrateful as His church ? See what He bears with, forgives, and forgets in His people, and then say, What have you to bear with and forgive ? Look at what Jesus is to His bride, and what you are to yours, and then say, Do you imitate His example ? Oh, what happy homes would the houses of Christians be, if every husband loved his wife as Jesus loves His church ; if every husband cared for his wife, as Jesus cares for His church ; if every husband consulted the honour and happiness of his wife as Jesus consults the honour and happiness of His Church. My brother, the Holy Spirit says, you ought to love your wife as your own body, as your own self ; yea, as Christ loved the church, who gave Himself for it. Your love should be tender, constant, uniform, and manifest as the love of Jesus is ; let there be no bitterness, or contempt, or treating the wife as an inferior ; but give honour unto her as the weaker vessel. Love her in Jesus, love her as Jesus bids you, love her and be happy.

THE WIFE'S RULE.

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord."—Ephes. v. 22.

THE comfort of home very much depends on the wife, and the happiness of the husband is greatly in her power. The wife has often ruined the husband, or rendered the marriage-tie a subject of deep regret. An ungovernable temper, a proud spirit, a wish to conform to all the fashions of the present world, has rendered many a Christian's home really miserable. Submission is difficult, where pride rules in the spirit; yea, it is impossible: and yet without submission on the part of the wife, happiness will never be the portion of the husband. Submission is the wife's duty: the Holy Spirit says, "As the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be unto their own husbands in every thing." A yielding temper and a meek quiet spirit are two of the most beautiful ornaments a wife can wear.

Every christian woman should look upon her husband as the representative of Christ in the family, and submit to him as such. Her submission should extend to every thing, that does not run counter to the commands of God. The less a wife desires to have her own will, the better for

her own comfort. In consequence of sin the Lord said, "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." And this declaration of God stands in full force at the present day, "The husband is the head of the wife, *even* as Christ is the head of the church." In these different epistles has the Holy Spirit spoken to wives, and commanded them to *submit* to their husbands ; this may imply that the duty is difficult, but it testifies that the duty is imperative.

The wife should prefer her own husband to every man in existence ; she should love him, as the church loves Christ ; and strive by every possible means to make him happy and honourable. She should strive to make his home the most comfortable, never meeting him at his return with a frown, or hailing him with a cross word ; but her countenance should be lighted up with love, and on her lips should be the law of kindness. A woman's love, judiciously manifested, is almost invincible ; and an evil temper indulged by a wife is most repulsive. Nothing weakens a husband's love, or teazes a husband's temper, like cross words or unpleasant looks from his wife. They never ought to be ; but if they have been, they should be confessed with sorrow, and conquered with care.

The wife should bear in mind, that her husband is a Christian ; that Jesus tenderly loves him ; that He has made him His representative ;

that He requires her to submit to him in His name, and for His sake ; and that He looks upon her disobedience as directed against His authority, her unkindness to her husband, as grieving His love. My sister, it is your duty to learn subjection for the Lord's sake, to imbibe and manifest a meek, lowly, and submissive spirit ; a spirit that will yield every thing for conscience' sake, except in so doing you would sin against God. Oh, if wives were willing to give up, if they only consulted the happiness of their husbands, if they made the precepts of the gospel their rule, what happy homes, what happy husbands we should have ! "Let the wife see that she reverence her husband." But is this the case, even with godly wives ? Can it be neglected, and the Spirit who commanded not be grieved ? Can the Spirit be daily grieved, by conduct the very opposite of His command, and the Christian be happy ? It is impossible. See then *one* cause why so many wives who are Christians, are in so low and uncomfortable a state. Chaste conversation should be coupled with fear—a fear to grieve, wound, or distress a husband's mind : and Sarah, who obeyed and revered Abraham, should be the wife's daily pattern. No wife can be happy, no wife can be ornamental, no wife can have the testimony of a good conscience, except she observes the precept, "Wives submit yourselves unto your husbands, *as it is fit* in the Lord."

A PARENT'S DUTY.

“Provoke not thy children to wrath ; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”—Ephes. vi. 4.

THE desire for and love to children are implanted in our nature by our good and great Creator ; and children are given to us to be brought up for the Lord. They are His property ; He only lends them to us to enjoy, to train, and prepare for future life. Children involve a great responsibility. They are immortal. They are depraved. They are ignorant. They need the most tender, wise, and constant training. Every parent is accountable to God for the manner in which he educates and brings up his children ; and that account must be rendered under the most solemn circumstances.

It is the parent's duty to instruct the child, not only in things natural, but in things spiritual. The great facts of revelation should be very early placed before the child's mind. The mother should do it. The child should learn from a mother's lips, that it is immortal ; that it is a sinner ; that as such it is exposed to the wrath of God ; that there is no way to God but by Jesus ; that nothing can be accepted of God but through Him. The person, the work, the character, the offices, and love of Jesus, should especially be

pressed on the child's attention. The true character of God, as just and yet merciful, as holy and yet love, as true to his word and yet ready to forgive, should be clearly unfolded to the child's understanding: in a word, the Bible, in its facts, doctrines, promises, prophecies, precepts; and especially the glorious glad tidings of a free salvation for sinners as sinners, for all who need and are willing to embrace it, should be instilled into the youthful mind. Our children should be made familiar with the Bible, and be impressed with a sense of its value, veracity, and excellence.

It is the parent's duty to pray *for* and *with* the child; especially should mothers do this. There is something in the tone of a mother's voice, in the tenderness of a mother's expressions, in the fervency of a mother's pleading, which cannot be imitated. A father hath it not, nor can he acquire it. When a mother takes her child aside into a private apartment, and having spoken to it of God, of Jesus, of sin, of the need of a new heart, she bids it kneel down by her, she takes its little hands into one of hers, she lays the other on its head, and offers up a mother's prayer—full of pathos, of glowing desire, of holy reverence—she does that which the child cannot forget. The tones of her voice, the earnestness of her pleading, the gentle pressure of the hand, will never be forgotten while memory holds her seat. Parents should gather up the promises which God hath

made to children, and plead them with faith, earnestness, and importunity at His throne, for and with their children.

It is the parent's duty to set a proper example before children; knowing that what is seen, makes more impression than what is merely heard. Parents should never *tell*, or *act* a lie before their children. They should never trifle with Divine things, or expose the faults of God's people, or speak slightly of the Lord's ministers before their children; but should set the Lord always before their face, and be always aiming at the *immediate* conversion of every one of their offspring. They should not only avoid setting a wrong example before them, but also endeavour to keep them as much as they prudently can from others who would do so; remembering the words of the wise man, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but the companion of fools shall be destroyed."

Once more: parents should early *lead* their children to the house of God, and teach them the nature, parts, and design of public worship: pointing out to them that God requires the worship of the heart, the service of the entire person. That God is present in an especial manner when His people meet, and notices and will punish the insults offered to Him when His people thus assemble.

How important it must be then for parents to

be real Christians, not only for their own account, but for their children's sake. Parents, your situation is most solemn and responsible ; remember, very much of your own conduct depends upon how you bring up your children ; also that others will be benefited or injured by your children ; and above all, that you must meet every child at the judgment-seat of Christ ; and how dreadful it would be, if your child should there witness that you were accessory to its damnation.

Lord, assist us by thy grace
To instruct our infant race ;
Grant us wisdom from above,
Fill us with a Saviour's love.

Let us in thy peace abide,
In thy promises confide,
While our seed with ready zeal,
Learn of us to do thy will.

May we teach them day by day,
In the house and by the way,
When they rise or go to rest ;
Till thy truth shall make them blest.

While in childhood's tender age,
They unfold the sacred page,
May they see in every line
Kindling rays of light divine.

Precious Saviour, hear our prayer !
We commit them to thy care ;
Be their Shepherd, and their guide,—
Bring them to thy bleeding side.

THE FATHER'S PRAYER.

“ Lord, have mercy on my son.”—Matt. xvii. 15.

HERE is a father in trouble, in trouble about his son. The son was a sinner, a sufferer, and in great danger. The father knew the danger of his son, deeply felt for his condition, was daily grieved on his account, and desired his deliverance at any expense. This is very much the case with us, in reference to our children, when suffering from bodily distempers ; but is it so in reference to their souls ? Our children are all sick of a mortal disease ; it is rooted in their very nature ; they suffer from it now, for every pain and disease is the effect of sin ; they are in imminent danger of perishing for ever ; they hang over hell by a mere thread, the thread of time. We are not sure that they will not be in hell in five minutes ; death may seize them in a moment, and in heaven they cannot be, unless they are born from above, and are sanctified by the Holy Spirit ; for “ without holiness, no one can see the Lord.” But do we realize this ? Do we feel for their eternal welfare, as we do for their temporal ? Or as this man did for his afflicted son ? Are we daily grieved to see our children the enemies of God, the friends of Satan, the slaves of sin ? Such they must be, if not truly

converted by grace. Are we desiring their deliverance from sin, Satan, the world, and the wrath of God, above every thing beside? Do we say so by our conduct? Do our prayers say so? Does our conversation with our children say so? Alas! alas! how few feel or act consistently on this subject!

Here is a father with Jesus. He had heard of the Saviour, of His works of mercy, of the power He displayed, and the kindness He showed to all. His trouble, connected with this information, brought him to Jesus; he came for his son; he came without an invitation; he came at a peradventure; a father's heart impelled him; he fell at the Redeemer's feet, and out of a full heart, with a loud voice, he cried, "Lord, have mercy on my son." We have heard of Jesus, we know Him, we are invited by Him; but do we come to Him as this man for our children? My brother, hast thou a son that is unruly, perverse, and wicked? Go to Jesus for him, as this poor man did; go on purpose; go and appeal to His tender heart; go and plead what He did for this man and for others; go frequently; go in faith, and thou shalt not go in vain.

Here is a father at prayer for his son. He kneeled before Jesus; he lifted up a father's eye, and looked into his heart; he lifted up a father's voice, and awakened his tenderest sympathies; he poured forth a father's prayer, and obtained

relief. See how simple his words : " Lord, have mercy on my son." How earnest his manner ; how humble his spirit ; how importunate his application ;—he had applied to others, and even to the disciples in vain ; but he would not, he could not rest until he had tried the Lord, and he was successful ; he tried His mercy, and the Lord listened to Him ; he tried His power, and the Lord healed his son. Parents, do not despond ; never give over a child as lost ; Jesus can heal the most desperate case ; He can restore the greatest wanderer, He can melt the most obdurate heart, He can reclaim the foulest transgressor. Only realize the danger of your children, believe the promises made to you in God's blessed book ; feel that none but Jesus can effect the change you desire ; and apply to Him in faith, determined to take no denial ; wrestle, plead, wait, watch, expect, and walk according to your prayers, and you must succeed. " The Lord is full of pity and of great mercy." Bring your sons with you to Jesus, if you can, get them to kneel by your side and hear you pray for them ; but if they will not, go for them ; and remember that " the fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much " Prayer cannot be lost. God stands engaged to hear and answer the prayer of faith, and Jesus, at the right-hand of the Father, is your Advocate and Intercessor, and will sprinkle your prayers with His blood.

THE SUCCESSFUL MOTHER.

“ O woman, great is thy faith ; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.”—Matt. xv. 28.

MOTHERS, here is an example for you to imitate ; here is encouragement for you under your trials ; here is a mother who had a daughter possessed of the devil, grievously vexed. The case seemed desperate. The trial was of long standing ; all her efforts hitherto had been in vain ; her discouragements were many and great : she was a Gentile ; she came unbidden ; when she came, Jesus would not notice her ; when she cried, “ He answered her not a word ;” her perseverance offended the disciples, and they said, “ Send her away ;” when the Saviour addressed her, His language appeared unkind, as though He had called her a dog ; her application appeared to be useless, for He said, “ I am only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel ;” but she would not be discouraged. She had heard that He had power and she believed it. She had heard that He was kind, and she believed it. She had heard that He never had refused any one who applied to Him, and she believed it. She believed that He could help her and no one else. She believed He would help her, and therefore she persevered. And as she believed so it was ; when tried, she came forth as gold ; and Jesus said unto her, “ O woman,

great is thy faith ; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

Mothers, does not this woman's conduct reprove you? Is there not reason to fear that she will rise up in the judgment and condemn many British mothers? many professing mothers?—will she condemn you? You have children dear to you as hers was ; yours also are possessed by Satan, for he is "the spirit that worketh in all the children of disobedience ;" (Ephes. ii. 2,) that is, in all unconverted children. No one can cast out Satan, and make your children the temples of the Holy Ghost, but Jesus ; but He can ; He daily does so in the instance of others ; but do you feel for them as this mother did? Do you believe the danger they are in, as pointed out in your Bible? Do you believe them to be children of wrath, under the curse of the law, and exposed to all the terrors of the Lord? Do you apply to Jesus as though you believed this? Do you persevere as this woman did? Remember, you have greater encouragement, you know more of Jesus than she did, you are invited by Him—she was not ; He bids you come to Him. Are you burdened with the state of your family, and does your concern for their eternal welfare weary you? He says, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." You have His promise, "I will in no wise cast out." "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name that will

I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it." You have so many encouraging examples. (Matt. xiv. 34—36.) Hannah was heard for Samuel. Lois was heard for Timothy. And you will be heard for yours.

Mothers, does not your own conduct reprove you? If your child is sick, you send for the surgeon, consult the nurse, watch it by night and by day, sparing neither time, trouble, toil, nor expense, that it may be restored again to health; but do you act thus in reference to the souls of your children, which are sick and dying with the disease of sin? You have sat up the whole night to watch beside the couch of the sick body; but did you ever devote part of a night for the special purpose of seeking the salvation of the soul? You have suspended all other business to attend to the suffering body; but are you as ready to leave business at times to plead with God for the soul? You consider that you would not be justified, that your conscience would not acquit you, if you had left any likely means untried, to restore bodily health; but have you tried all means with the same care, concern, and promptness, for the salvation of the soul? And if not, how can you be justified, or how can your consciences acquit you? Consider this, consider it seriously, as before God, and the Lord make you consistent mothers.

THE CHILD'S GUIDE.

“Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.”—Col. iii. 20.

WE may grow up to be men, but while our parents live we cannot cease to be children; and our love to, respect for, and concern to please our parents, should continue as long as the Lord spares them. Our parents have a right to command as long as we are dependant upon them, and we are bound to obey; not only because they have authority founded in nature, but because God commands us in the word of His grace. The parent's will is the child's rule, except the parent requires anything plainly opposed to the will of God. No child can be justified in despising, or grieving, or disobeying a parent; even though that parent be poor, illiterate, and humble in appearance; for we are not commanded to obey our parents if they are rich, or if they are learned, or if they are highly respected; but because they are our parents. And we should bear in mind, that they did not become our parents by chance; but by the appointment of God; and the God who appointed the relationship, says to us, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for

this is right. Honour thy father and mother ; which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth." (Eph. vi. 1—3.)

Parents are to be honoured by their children, and except they are steeped in vice and dyed in open sin, they are to be honoured by us every where ; a father should always be treated with reverence and respect, and a mother with attention and love. If they need, their children should consider it not only a duty, but an honour to assist them ; if they do not need, they should often receive the little token of affectionate remembrance, and the distinguishing mark of special attention. A father's care should be repaid by the child's deference ; and a mother's kindness, by the child's affectionate attention. The obedience of children to their parents pleases the Lord ; but their disobedience grieves and provokes Him : and very commonly it is the case, that Providence so orders it, that our children behave to us just as we did to our parents ; and many a parent will see in the conduct of his children, the anti-type of his own, if he is a careful, thoughtful, observer.

Reader, how did you act toward your parents ? Have you felt that your disobedience to them was a sin against God ; a sin to be repented of and confessed before God with sorrow ? How are you acting to them now ? Remember, with whatso-

ever measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again; and this will apply with great force to your behaviour to your parents. You cannot disobey, or slight, or treat your parents with any degree of disrespect, but God notices and disapproves, and will chastise for it. Christians ought especially to be kind, attentive, and obedient to their parents; and if their parents are still graceless, they should pray earnestly for them, and try by amiableness of manner, sweetness of temper, and particular displays of kindness, to bring them under the word. Many a child has smarted after a parent's death for not having used all possible means to secure the salvation of the soul while living; happy is the child who has nothing to regret, whose conscience does not accuse him, who can think of a departed parent without a fear or apprehension of meeting him before the judgment-seat of Christ. Children, God bids you to love, respect, and honour your parents; do so publicly and privately: do so, from love to God and respect to the authority of the Lord Jesus; do now as you may wish you had done when you see your parent on his dying pillow, or when lying there yourself.

THE FATHER'S JOY.

“My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine.”—Prov. xxiii. 15.

A GODLY parent cannot but feel the deepest interest in the present and everlasting welfare of his child ; his solicitude is often painful, and his fears distressing. Nothing pains such an one, like seeing his beloved child indifferent to spiritual things ; and choosing the things of time, in preference to the Lord Jesus and His salvation. No one but a parent can at all enter into a parent's feelings on this point ; and only those parents who live up to their profession, and constantly realize the importance of truth, and the solemnities of eternity, know the deep concern that is felt by such. The desire of such a parent is here beautifully and touchingly set forth.

“My son, if thine heart be wise.” It is not the wisdom of this world that is intended, but that wisdom which cometh down from above, and which “is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.” This wisdom is discovered by its possessor, in avoiding evil company, forbidden paths, pernicious principles, and prohibited pleasures ; by choosing the company of

the wise, the holy, and the humble ; by pursuing those things which God requires, the Scripture commands, and the saints of God approve ; by imbibing and circulating principles which are pure and scriptural, true and peaceable, and free from all extravagance ; and by seeking and enjoying those pleasures which come from God and lead to God. If the heart be really wise, it is wise unto salvation ; and this wisdom gives a dignity and a savour to the conversation and life. If the heart be wise, the life will be holy, and the end safe and honourable.

Well may the parent say, " My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine." Oh, with what joy does the parent witness the indications of concern for the salvation of the soul !—with what pleasure does he see his beloved child retire for private prayer, and observe him reading the word of God with attention and concern ! What pleasure does it impart to see the tear of penitence sparkle in the eye, more lovely than the dew-drops of the morning ; or, to hear the inquiry, " What must I do to be saved ?" Nothing can impart such pure and solid satisfaction as this.

My young friends, your parents, if godly, are full of solicitude for your spiritual welfare ; for you they agonise in prayer, and travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you. Consider, I beseech you, your solemn responsibility ; grieve

not your parents, by turning to folly ; insu. not your God, by rejecting His council ; disappoint not your minister, by despising your own soul ; ruin not your prospects, by persevering in sin. But gladden your beloved parents, honour your Creator and your God, rejoice the heart of your minister, and secure your own happiness and honour, by seeking the Lord while He may be found, and obtaining the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. Youth is the seed-time of life ; what is sown now will spring up and ripen, and by-and-by will come the harvest ; if you sow to the flesh by gratifying its lusts and passions, you will reap sorrow, misery, and woe ; but if you sow to the Spirit, by seeking the present and everlasting salvation of your soul, you will reap everlasting life. God bids you remember Him, seek Him, and love Him ; and promises to be found of you, bless you, and manifest Himself unto you.

God speaks to you as a Father : He says, " My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine." There is joy in heaven over a repenting sinner. The Father rejoices, in an object of His love ; the Son rejoices, in the result of His agonies and death ; the Holy Spirit rejoices, in the soul He has renewed ; the spirits of the just rejoice, in the addition of another to their number ; and the holy angels rejoice, in the triumphs of their God and Lord. There is joy on earth

also : parents rejoice, with joy which none but parents know ; ministers rejoice, and are encouraged in their work ; saints rejoice, and see an answer to their prayers ; and the penitent rejoices with unspeakable joy.

Oh, how divine, how sweet the joy,
When but one sinner turns,
And with a humble, broken heart,
His sins and errors mourns !

Pleas'd with the news, the saints below
In songs their tongues employ ;
Beyond the skies the tidings go,
And heaven is fill'd with joy.

Well pleas'd the Father sees and hears
The conscious sinner's moan ;
Jesus receives him in his arms,
And claims him for his own.

Nor angels can their joys contain,
But kindle with new fire :
" The sinner lost is found," they sing,
And strike the sounding lyre.

ESTABLISHMENT BY FAITH

“By faith ye stand.” 2 Cor. i. 24.

“It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace.” “But if ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.” Establishment consists in holding fast our profession. We profess to believe the gospel ; all it says of us, of our God, of our Lord Jesus Christ, of our foes, and of our trials ; and to yield all that it requires, in the strength that it promises. It includes, maintaining our character as the disciples of Christ, the holy ones, the children of God who imitate their Father which is in heaven, the friends of God and the light of the world. It involves perseverance in the paths of holiness, pressing toward the mark for the prize of our high-calling, abounding in the work of the Lord. It supposes the enjoyment of our privileges, such as peace with God, realizing the favour of God, rejoicing in God, walking in sweet fellowship with God, receiving grace from God, and glorying even in tribulation. It is to continue in Christ, as the branch in the vine ; living with Christ, as the wife with her husband ; confiding in Christ, as one in the friend which is as his own soul ; and deriving all from Christ, as the member from union to the head. To stand, to keep our post,

fulfil our duties, adorn our profession, hold fast our principles, persevere in our work, and be steadfast in the Saviour's cause.

Establishment is only by faith. By faith we live. By faith we walk. By faith we overcome. By faith we receive the salvation of our souls. Faith looks to Christ *for* all we need, *in* every difficulty, and *from* every foe, Jesus says, "Look unto me and be ye saved." Here is the warrant of faith. Faith says, "Therefore will I look unto the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me." Here is the purpose of faith. The Lord hears, approves, and answers; and then faith bears testimony, saying, "Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word." Or, perceiving the result in the experience of others: "They looked unto Him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed." Faith leans on Christ. The strongest believer feels his weakness most, and therefore, like the spouse, he comes, "up out of the wilderness, leaning upon His beloved." Faith carries every thing to Christ, which keeps up a constant intercourse with Him. Faith receives every thing from Christ, which keeps alive a sense of dependance and obligation. Faith uses the strength of Christ, which renders it necessary to realize union, and walk close with Him. Faith lives upon Christ, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and whatever else may

be needed. When faith rules, CHRIST IS ALL." Thus it is that faith establishes us, or makes us to stand ; for faith is an acting, growing, imperishable principle.

True faith brings us to Christ as sinners, and keeps us near Christ as saints. Though shaken and weakened by backsliding, it will recover its hold and maintain its standing. It sticks to the cross, like the limpet on the rock ; nor can waves, or winds, or storms, cause it to relinquish its hold. Our stability is as our faith is ; if faith be strong and active, our souls will be steady, being stayed on the Lord ; but if our faith be weak and sickly, our hearts will be dull and wavering. Faith should be fed, by frequent meditation on the promises, and the person and work of Jesus ; or our perseverance will not be apparent or comfortable. Unless faith be vigorous, we shall neither be active nor happy in the Lord's ways ; but duty will be drudgery, and privileges a task. Unless our faith be fixed on the person and work of Jesus, and have much to do with the gospel as a display of rich, free, and sovereign grace, we shall neither be happy in the love of God, holy in our spirit, temper, and conduct, nor be established in the truth. Every thing is to us, as our faith is. Jesus said, " According to your faith, be unto you : " and it is still so to a much greater extent than many even of the Lord's people think. The Lord increase our faith !

THE GOOD FORTUNE.

"Godliness with contentment is great gain"
—1 Tim. vi. 6.

GODLINESS is conformity to the moral image of God, and the entire consecration of the soul to the Lord's service. The godly, are created anew in Christ Jesus ; they are united to God through Jesus ; and have all the graces or fruits of the Spirit within them. They view things very much as God does ; hence they look upon sin as the greatest of all evils ; upon the world, as a vast vanity ; upon saints, as the excellent of the earth ; and upon the Lord Jesus, as altogether lovely. They hate sin, renounce the world, unite with the saints, and adore the Saviour as their God and Lord. They approve of God's precepts, and choose the employment he prescribes. They love God, believe in Jesus, and walk in the Spirit. They fear sin, loathe self, and walk in the fear of the Lord all the day long. They rely wholly on the perfect work of Christ for acceptance ; pant for holiness with ardent longing ; and desire always to acquiesce in the sovereign will of God.

True godliness produces and strengthens contentment ; and contentment is the calm sunshine

of a man's life. We do not mean sitting down in idleness, feeling at home in filth, or indulging in negligence ; this were a disgrace to any creature, especially a professing Christian. But contentment is connected with honest industry, general cleanliness, and a concern for the honour of God : it springs from acknowledging and eyeing God's providence, whose "tender mercies are over all His works." It is a bowing to His will, as the infinitely wise and invariably good : believing the promises He has given, expecting the provision He has made, and feeling satisfied to share in the common lot with His people. The contented prize spiritual blessings before temporal, and live sensible of their demerit and desert. They know that every thing short of hell is a favour, and that heaven will crown the toils and privations of the wilderness. They do not expect to find rest below, or a paradise in the desert ; and they are persuaded "that all things work together for good, to them that love God, and are the called according to His purpose." Pride is slain, and humility flourishes ; for pride is the parent of discontent, ingratitude, peevishness, rebellion against God, and many other evils ; while humility produces contentment, patience, gratitude, submission to the will of God, and many other virtues.

The godly who are contented are rich ; for they have a good fortune. They have inward

peace and satisfaction of mind, which are better than gold, they are filled with gratitude and thankfulness to God, which are better than a landed estate ; they have love to God and delight in Him, which are preferable to a splendid mansion. They have a joyful anticipation of eternal glory, of being acknowledged as the sons of God and fellow-heirs of Jesus, which is to be esteemed before all the titles and honours of this perishing world. They live in the enjoyment of what they have, and hoping for that they have not: the mind is on a level with the estate, and they are strangers to fretfulness, murmuring, and the constant vexations which most men experience. They prove that “ Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great revenues and trouble therewith.” Reader, are you a godly person? Are you acquainted with God as your God, your Friend, your Father? Are you contented with your place, portion, and prospect in this world? If so, you have a good fortune.

“ My God !—for I can call thee *mine*,
My Father and my Friend ;—
Am I not thine, for ever thine ?
To thee my groans ascend.

My God will hear me when I cry,
And bring salvation near ;
My God will all my wants supply,
And manifest His care.”

A POWERFUL INDUCEMENT TO LIBERALITY.

“He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and what he hath given will He pay him again.”—Prov. xix. 17.

ONE design of the religion of the Bible, is to remove us from the region of selfishness and covetousness, in which we all dwell by nature, and teach us self-denial and true Christian charity. He that dislikes such a topic as this, is in an unhealthy state of mind; for the Lord's word is very plain and pointed on the subject.

Let us notice the interesting position of the poor: they are the Lord's representatives and collectors; they come to us in God's name, and ask of us, as from Him who gave us our all. Every thing we have is from God. Are you in the habit of viewing things thus? Your property is from God. Did you earn it?—Who gave you the talent, the opportunity, the health to do so? Did you inherit it?—Who appointed that you should be born in such a connexion, at such a time, and directed your relatives or friends to leave it to you?—Is it much? or is it little? Who fixed the measure and the sum? These things come forth from the Lord of Hosts, who is wise in heart, excellent in counsel, and wonderful in working. The poor are our *tests* or *trials*. The Lord by them tries

our professions and our principles. He has informed us in His word what He requires. He sends them to see if we regard His authority, and observe His commands. He notices how we conduct ourselves towards them.

Observe the true character of benevolent donations; they are loans to the Lord. We should recognise His hand in the application, His authority requiring us to give, His eyes as observing our movements, His heart as approving genuine benevolence, His memory as recording every kind action, and His faithfulness as pledged to reward us. We *give* to the poor, but in so doing we only *lend* to the Lord.

Consider the great inducement to liberality; what is given to the poor, the Lord will repay. He places it to our account, and assures us we shall never want it. "He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack." (Prov. xxviii. 27.) Here the Lord engages to prevent it. Such shall be happy. "He that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he." (Prov. xiv. 21.) They shall be blessed. "He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor." (Prov. xxii. 9.) Man will bless him, and God will bless him too. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The

Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing ; thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness." (Ps. xli. 1—3.) His kindness shall be returned, as Joseph returned his brethren's money in their sacks. "Cast thy bread upon the waters ; for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven and also to eight ; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth." (Eccl. xi 1, 2.) "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth ; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat ; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." (Prov. xi. 24, 25.) The descendants of the liberal shall be blessed. "I have been young, and now am old ; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lendeth, and *his seed is blessed*." (Ps. xxxvii. 25, 26.) God is pleased with the liberal. "To do good and to communicate forget not ; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." (Heb. xiii. 16.)

Thus, you perceive the Lord is a bounteous receiver, even though the poor to whom you give should prove ungrateful ; therefore while their conduct should make us prudent, His promise should keep us benevolent. Brethren, in giving to the poor, give from love to Jesus—from respect to the command of God—from faith in His gracious promise, according as you have ability and opportunity.

THE UNGRATEFUL.

“Where are the nine?”—Luke xvii. 17.

TEN lepers had been cleansed—one only returned to give glory to God ; struck with their ingratitude, Jesus enquires, “Where are the nine?” They had received mercy, the greatest temporal mercy they could receive. They could not be insensible of it—they must know it. They were expected to be thankful, and manifest their gratitude. But they were negligent and ungrateful, and Jesus notices their ingratitude. The Lord will enquire after the NINE, after every ONE who has received mercy. But how many obtain who never acknowledge ! How many owe the debt of gratitude, who never attempt to pay it !

When does the Lord enquire after the ungrateful ? When His people present themselves at His throne, to praise Him for mercies received, and plead for the blessings they need. When they assemble in His ordinances, to celebrate His goodness, commemorate His love, adore His perfections, and enjoy His sweet presence. When His truth is falling in the street, or is vilified and spoken against. When His poor people are pinched by poverty, and need some one to relieve and comfort them. When His servants are persecuted

and oppressed, and need a friend to stand by and cheer them. When His cause is low in any place, and needs to be fostered, screened, and supported. Then the Lord asks, "Where are the nine?" Where are those who have received such great mercies at my hands? They ought to be first at my throne; foremost in my house; zealous for my truth; ready to help my poor; delighted to animate my servants; and pleased to assist my cause.

But where are the nine? Perhaps some of them are in the world, mixed up with the giddy multitude; devoted to pleasure, or business, and find no time, nor feel any inclination, to return to give glory to God. Others are lulled asleep in carnal security, and fancying they are God's favourites, they rest upon their lees, neglect christian duties, and dishonour the worthy name whereby they are called. But they ought, if they have obtained spiritual blessings, to be in the church; devoting themselves to the Lord's glory, and using all their talents for the increase of the Redeemer's kingdom. They ought to be awake, and active, and zealous, showing forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light.

But will not this inquiry be started by and bye, when the sheep are separated from the goats, when the Lord's people are collected together, will not many be missing whom we expected to

find among them? Ah! where will the ungrateful be then? Now they may have a name among the saints. Now they may have a place in the church. But then they will be banished from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power. Then all the ungrateful will be herded together, and be driven to darkness, death, and black despair. Ah! "where are the nine?" Once they were with the saints. Once we expected to see them among the glorified. But where are they?

Dear Reader, let us examine ourselves, and ask, Where am I now? Am I in Christ? No safety out of Him. No salvation but by union to Him. We must be *one with Christ*, or we perish for ever. Where am I now? Am I in the path of duty? Am I where the Lord would have me to be? What am I? Am I a Christian? A decided Christian? A grateful Christian? A devoted Christian? What am I doing? Am I working for God? Walking with God? Aiming in all things at the glory of God? "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Friend, let us acknowledge the mercies we have received; we are undeserving of the least; they flow spontaneously from the kind heart of God; they ought to be acknowledged, and our God be praised, according to that which he hath done for us. He requires it. He expects it. He demands it at our

hands. It is just. It is reasonable. The Lord will enquire after us if we neglect it. He will send by His ministers, by His providence, or by His Spirit, and will ask, "WHERE ARE THE NINE?"

THE DETECTION.

“ This is one of them.”—Mark xiv. 69.

THE disciples were objects of suspicion and dislike ; their Master was suffering, and it was intended that they should share with Him. They wished to be unknown, but they could not be hid. Their connexion with Jesus was become notorious : and Peter was soon recognised as “ one of them.” Real religion cannot be hid. It is association with Jesus, as His disciples, to be taught His doctrines ; as His subjects, to be ruled by His laws ; as His dependants, to be supplied by His bounty. All His disciples believe His testimony ; reverence His authority ; walk by His rules ; and venture in His cause. As His disciples, they were the objects of general disapprobation ; they were exposed to fiery temptations and cruel persecution ; but still, every right-minded being would congratulate a sinner, when detected as being “ one of them.” And there are many who are so ; the charge is still applicable to thousands ; they are such as hear the gospel attentively ; who pray fervently and secretly ; who acquiesce heartily in God’s plan of salvation ; who separate decidedly from the world ; and who cleave to the saints affectionately.

Reader, do you know any person who attentively listens to the gospel message; who prays fervently to God, as a God in Christ; who is willing to be saved by grace; who comes out of the world, and feels attached to the saints? "This is one of them." He has a right to a place in the church of God; he has a title to all the great and glorious promises of the gospel; he is interested in all the blessings of the new and better covenant. The privileges of such are great; as peace with God; access into His presence with confidence; to enjoy the friendship of God; to be the heir of God: and to be acknowledged as the Lord's at last. Then their pleasures will be eternal, and their joys unspeakably great. Then it will be the greatest honor to be recognised as "one of them."

But many try to conceal their connexion with Jesus now. They love Him, believe in Him, and walk with Him—in secret; but they determine no one shall know it. They will not make a profession lest they should turn back; but they will go to heaven quietly by themselves. This they will find impossible: for the savour of their conversation, their preference of spiritual persons, and their attachment to the means of grace, will be sure to betray them; and some discerning Christian will soon say of them, "This is one of them." The good tree will bear good fruit: and by its fruit it will be known. The fountain of

grace opened in the heart will send forth its streams, and the streams will discover it. It was said of the Master, "He could not be hid;" neither can the disciples. For in this the children of God are manifest, that they love the very name of Jesus; they cannot bear those that are evil; they must strive for the salvation of others; they are tenderly attached to all in whom the Saviour's image shines; and they grieve over sin, and pant for perfect holiness.

Reader, are you "one of them?" It is an important question: for the Lord says, He will "spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him:" He will "put a difference between the Hebrews and the Egyptians:" He will separate them from others, "as a shepherd divideth between the sheep and the goats; He will set the one on His right hand and the other on His left:" He will say to the one, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world:" but He will say to the other, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: and these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Oh to be "one of *them* then!" How blessed, how glorious it will be! But if we are found among them then, we must be now; for now they are collected, then they will be manifested.

THE LIAR'S PORTION.

“ All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone : which is the second death.”—Rev. xxi. 8.

LYING is attempting to deceive ; and every species of designed deception is lying. It is common to human nature, but it is abhorred of God. It is often practised without fear, though thus plainly denounced in God's word. It is even pleaded for as necessary in some cases, and yet, in every instance the threatening will be made good. There is much lying associated with religion ; in some religious services there is much falsehood—more is said than intended, or the heart contradicts the lips. This is awful, but it is very common. Deception is very much practised in trade ; the article is misrepresented as to price, quality, and sometimes quantity. The seller tries to deceive, assuring the buyer that it is cheaper and better than it is ; the buyer attempts to deceive by running down the goods, saying, “ It is naught, it is naught ;” and going away boasteth of his bargain. But “ all liars shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with brimstone and fire.” Deception is often practised in families ; the parents deceive the children : the ser-

vants deceive their mistress ; the mistress requires the servant to try and deceive the visitor, by saying, "*Not at home ;*" each part of the family tries to deceive the other ; and yet " all liars shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with brimstone and fire." Deception is practised in common intercourse ; when the company is disagreeable, it is often said, " I am glad to see you : " when there is no wish for the visit to be repeated, it is enquired " when will you call again ? " In relating the common occurrences of life, they are exaggerated, or a part of the circumstances is designedly kept back ; the promise is readily given, but as frequently broken ; in a word, lying is common in order to injure, to gain, or to gratify an evil passion : but " all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with brimstone and fire."

But will all liars perish ? Yes, if they live and die impenitent. But will not the practise of the trade, or the custom of the country, or the fashion of the times, form an excuse ? No ; all liars shall perish. If they repent of this sin, confess it before God, and forsake it in their practice, through the blood of Jesus, they may obtain a pardon ; but otherwise, every liar shall have *his* " part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." There is a place of punishment on purpose for liars, called "*their part.*" It is very severe, compared to a

lake of fire and brimstone. It is called the second death, because it is separation from God after separation from friends. It deprives of all cheering hope, all sweet company, all bright and animating prospects: there the mind is filled with tormenting reflection, and harassed by the recollection of past follies, sins, and opportunities. There the worm of an ever-accusing conscience dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. Reader, are you guilty of this sin? Do you lie for gain, or revenge, or from custom, or to cover other faults, or to keep a situation? Remember, "all liars have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." None of God's people are habitual liars. No liar can be a Christian. Every liar is for ever excluded from heaven. Every liar is daily and knowingly bespeaking a place in hell. Art thou a professor? Leave off lying, or leave off professing the religion of truth. Are you without the church? Never think of entering it until you have learned habitually to speak the truth. Are you attempting to soften down the subject and excuse the sin? Remember, God is a jealous God, and He has told thee as plain as possible in His holy word, that "all liars shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Disbelieve this, and you make God a liar.

PRIVILEGE, DUTY, AND PROMISE.

“I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt; open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.”—Ps. lxxxi. 10.

OUR greatest privilege is, to have God for our God; to know Him, to love Him, to adore Him, and to trust in Him. If God is ours, all must be well. If God has delivered us from the Egypt of this world, the power of sin, and the tyranny of Satan, He is our God. He delivered Israel because He was their God, and He delivered us because we were His people. He says, “I am JEHOVAH.” “The compassionate God; who sympathises with my people in their sorrows, counts their tears, feels their groans, and records their prayers.” The Psalmist bears his testimony to this, saying, “Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.” (Ps. lxxxvi. 15.) “I am JEHOVAH.” “The God of power, who delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage; whose strength is infinite as my nature, for whom nothing is too hard.” “I am JEHOVAH.” “The God of love, whose resources are boundless, whose pity is tender, and who never fails or forsakes those who trust in my word.” “I am JEHOVAH thy God, pledged to thee by promise; engaged

for thee by covenant ; and bound to thee by oath
As I am thy God, look to me, trust in me, expect from me."

"Open thy mouth wide." "Ask *largely*, for great, numerous, and costly blessings ; be not afraid of asking for too much. My heart is large, my love is great, my wealth is unbounded. Ask *boldly* : be not dispirited, but come boldly to my throne of grace, that you may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Ask *frequently* : I am always ready to give ; I am never weary of listening to your prayers ; come whenever you need, I rejoice to do you good ; no parent ever delighted to give to a darling child, as I delight to give to thee ; therefore ask and receive, that your joy may be full. Ask with *importunity* : do not fancy you are denied, because the answer is delayed ; I love to hear you plead ; I delight to see you come, and come again ; therefore plead until you prevail : seek until you possess the blessing."

"Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." "I have the very blessings you need, they are by me, they are for thee. I have the disposition to give ; do not doubt my benevolence, for this grieves my heart. I give you my word, that I will bestow my favours upon you freely, plentifully, and frequently ; my word is plain, read it ; it is faithful, trust it ; it is honest, plead it ; it is sure, expect the fulfilment of it. I have wrought

for thee in times past, I am in the same mind now as then ; my nature is still as gracious and merciful ; I will hear and bless thee. I will do for thee all I have promised ; I will give thee all thou asketh of me in faith, that is, giving me credit for honesty, faithfulness, and love ; I will do exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think."

Reader, are we not *reproved* ? Do we daily give our God credit for being so kind ? Do we ask of Him, believing that He is faithful ? Alas ! we often ask in fear, or ask for but little ! Are we not *exhorted* ? Exhorted to change our views of God, and our conduct in reference to God. Let us humble ourselves before Him, because we have thought so improperly of Him, and conducted ourselves so inconsistently towards Him. He is generous, bountiful and blessed.

" Behold the throne of grace !

The promise calls thee near ;
There Jesus shows a smiling face,
And waits to answer pray'r

My soul, ask what thou wilt,
Thou canst not be too bold ;
Since His own blood for thee He spilt,
What else can He withhold ?

Beyond thy utmost wants
His love and power can bless ;
To praying souls he always grants
More than they can express."

HEARING THE GOSPEL

“ Take heed how you hear.”—Luke viii. 18.

THE gospel is a message sent from God to man ; it is directed to every one that hears it, and is as much intended for each, as if every man's name were appended to it. No one has therefore a right to say, “ I am not interested in it, it does not concern me ;” nor can any one be justified in refusing to listen to it. It is sent to all, it is addressed to every creature ; and it proves either a savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death. Every man is either softened or hardened by the gospel ; it always has an effect, but not always the same effect ; therefore, “ take heed how ye hear.”

The gospel should be heard with close attention, for it is the word of God and not the word of man. It should be listened to with deep seriousness ; for it speaks of the most solemn and important subjects. The thoughts should be exercised upon it, for it is deep, and conveys the thoughts of God. It should be heard with prayer ; for as the Holy Spirit alone can unfold and apply it to the heart, so that it shall work effectually, prayer should ascend while we are hearing, that the Holy Spirit would take of the things of Christ

and shew them unto us. It should be mixed with faith, or be cordially and heartily believed ; it demands our credence, it calls for the confidence of the heart, and should be received with warm affections. Every one should hear for himself, as though there was no one present but himself to listen to the word ; and should hear as if death was at his back, judgment before his face, and eternity opening in the distance before him.

“Take heed how you hear ;” for there are many thoughtless persons, who hear the word, but understand it not ; there are many trifling hearers, whom Satan amuses even while they profess to listen to the voice of God ; there are many prayerless hearers, on whom the word falls as good seed upon a barren rock ; there are many unbelieving hearers, and the word does not profit them, because they have no faith ; there are many who hear for others, instead of themselves, and fancy that the word is suited to those around them, forgetting that it is God’s message to them ; and many are hardened by the word, and become twice dead, like trees plucked up by the roots, and dried in the summer’s sun.

“Take heed how you hear,” for all is not done when you have heard ; you are accountable for the use you make of the word, and must answer for the use or abuse of it before God. God will not allow any one to trifle with His gospel, slight His mercy, and insult His messages

with importunity. He is a jealous God. He will maintain His right. He will avenge His injured grace. The gospel brings a vast responsibility with it, and places us in very solemn circumstances. It brings God near to us ; by it He speaks with us ; and we either welcome Him, or say, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

"Take heed what you hear." Compare it with God's written word ; for many false spirits are gone out into the world." Imitate the noble Bereans, who searched the Scriptures daily, to see if what an Apostle preached corresponded therewith. We are solemnly bound to compare the preacher's message with God's word ; and receive or reject it, in proportion as it corresponds with or differs from it. We shall be judged by the word of God ; which word of God, in His kind and gracious providence, hath put into our hands, in our own mother tongue. "Blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it ;" who hide it in their hearts, write it on their memories, embrace it with their affections, and obey it in their lives. It is a blessing to have an opportunity to hear it ; a greater to have an inclination to embrace it ; but the greatest of all is, to be conformed to it in our hearts and lives. Such are indeed blessed ; for they have a lamp, to enlighten their darkness ; a map, to mark out their road ; plentiful provision for their souls, and eter-

nal life in promise and prospect. Reader, is this blessedness yours? Do you hear the word of God as a message sent to you from God? Do you hear it regularly, thoughtfully, prayerfully, with faith, for yourself? Do you keep it, in your thoughts, in your affections, in your life?

“Of all the sounds that soothe the mind,
The gospel is the best ;
There God appears supremely kind,
And men supremely blest.

There Christ His bleeding love reveals,
Our pardon to procure ;
There God the Holy Spirit seals,
And makes our pardon sure.

’Tis there the Lord’s all-conquering grace,
Its energy makes known ;
Saves us from sin’s destructive ways,
And wins us for His own.

There justice, with benignant look,
Withdraws her heavy charge,
Blots out transgressions from the book,
And sets our souls at large.

There mercy, from the boundless main,
Directs a constant tide ;
And bids us drink, and drink again,
Till we are satisfied.

Then let us in the gospel boast,
And strive to spread the sound
To the wide earth’s remotest coast
Where sons of men are found.

THE MYSTERY OF MERCY.

“God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.”—2 Cor. v. 19.

THE humanity of Christ was the temple of God ; for though it was more particularly united to one of the persons in Jehovah, yet in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. “God was in the anointed One.” He could dwell in Jesus, because there was no sin in Him. He did dwell in Him, speak through Him, and work by Him ; hence He said, “the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works.” Dwelling in Christ, He looked upon sinners with love ; He pitied them as a Father, He felt the deepest sympathy, He manifested the greatest tenderness, and shewed Himself full of compassion. Christ was the great manifester of God ; “God was manifested in flesh,” the flesh of Christ : He manifested the nature, mind, and purpose of God.

“God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.” Man never sought reconciliation with God, it did not once enter into his depraved mind ; but God formed a plan of reconciliation in eternity, and in time He came in Christ to accomplish it. This was done by removing the cause of enmity, which was SIN ; this sin was laid upon

Jesus, punished in Him, and for ever put away by Him ; it included the *demands of the law*, which demands were presented by Jesus, accepted by Him, and perfectly satisfied by His obedience unto death ; it embraced the *threatenings* of the word, and these were executed on Jesus ; the Shepherd took the blame for the sheep, and paid the entire penalty they had incurred. "He redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "He hath made Him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

God, in Christ, holds out the greatest encouragement to sinners to return and be friends ; He invites us, though rebels ; He promises us all the fulness of God, though traitors ; He warns us, that He may not punish us ; He expostulates with us, because we manifest unwillingness ; and He sets before us examples of the greatest enemies, whom He has restored to His favour, introduced to His kingdom, and made honourable among His people. He brings into friendship and fellowship, by accompanying His gospel with the power of His Holy Spirit, and winning over the heart by His grace.

The method He has adopted to reconcile, is most surprising ; it is thus expressed, "Not imputing their trespasses unto them." It is not denied that they are sinners, and many of them notorious sinners ; it is admitted, that God would

be just in punishing them eternally ; but He does not lay their sins to their charge, or place their transgressions to their account. Christ has suffered, that we may be spared. He was condemned, that we may be justified. Sin was charged on Him, that it may never be charged on us. He died, that we may live for ever. The whole of the curse fell on Him, that we may inherit a blessing. Justice was honoured and satisfied, by His obedience and death ; and now the sinner may be pardoned, justified, accepted, caressed, and glorified. Yea, now every penitent sinner, every one who believes in Jesus, must be pardoned, reconciled to God, and entitled to heaven.

This is a mystery of mercy, truly ; and it is all of God. It was contrived by His wisdom, approved by His justice, executed by His Son, is published by His servants, and is applied by His Holy Spirit. Man is treated with the greatest kindness, and God displays the richest grace and condescension. Sinner, look not at God as displayed in His judgments, or manifested in His works ; but look at Him in Jesus, there He is a reconciling God ; approach Him, plead with Him, believe His word, and expect His blessing ; He will not impute to thee thy sins, or punish thee for thy transgressions, but, “ He will abundantly pardon.”

THE PURCHASER'S SIN.

“ It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer but when he is gone his way he boasteth.”—
Prov. xx. 14.

Most people seem to be upon the look-out for bargains ; they are not satisfied with justice ; selfishness carries them beyond the golden rule, “ Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them ; for this is the law and the prophets.” (Matt. vii. 12.) The practices both of buyers and sellers must be grievous in the sight of God ; but it is with the former we have now to do. See them trying to cheapen an article : they are looking out for every fault ; not with a view to estimate its real value, but to reduce it below the market price. They say often what they do not, cannot believe ; and yet think themselves honest. All they want is to get a bargain ; they are not particular as to the means by which they obtain it ; they think not of the cost of the raw material, the wages of the workmen, or the profits of the tradesman ; but leave all these out of the question, and only try to reduce the price of the article. “ It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer.” “ It is not worth so much ;” and yet perhaps at the very moment they believe it to be worth more ; “ It is an in-

ferior article ;" and yet are perhaps conscious that it is an excellent one. They speak as if they cared nothing about it ; and yet they feel that they must have it, they cannot do without it. Or, perhaps, they try to depreciate it, that they themselves may obtain a large profit by it.

" But when he is gone his way he boasteth." " See," he says, " what a bargain ! I only gave so much for it, and it is worth so much. Look at the quality, or colour, or novelty." And yet perhaps, he had spoken against every one of these. Is this honest ? Is this fearing a lie ? Is there any thing like honour in such conduct ? Is it not a disgrace to the christian name ? Ought not such practices to be left to infidels and heathens ? Can we expect God's blessing on such a course ? It is impossible. God is neither the author nor the sanctioner of sin.

Buyers should remember, that the eye of God follows them into the shop or warehouse ; that the ear of God listens to every word they say ; that the book of God records every lie they tell ; and the word of God assures them, " that for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the Judgment." That the God they profess to revere and serve, hates sin, hates it perfectly, hates it always and everywhere ; that He makes no allowance for it, that He will not admit of any excuse for it. Buyers should remember also, that they are to do all to the glory

of God ; they are therefore to keep God's glory in view while buying, and as much in the shop as in the house of prayer.

Reader, be a Christian in the shop, as well as in the sanctuary ; in dealing with thy fellow-men, as well as in serving thy God. Be scrupulously honest ; maintain a tender conscience ; always fear a lie, or the appearance of a lie ; never be mean enough to stoop to practice deception ; but always realize that God is with thee. If all who profess the religion of Christ would only act out their principles, they would soon put an end to the wicked practice referred to, in this country. When you next go to shop, be sure you take this thought with you : " God is going with me, and is saying, Be holy, for I am holy : angels will observe my conduct and mark my words ; I must give an account of myself to God." Love thy neighbour as thyself. Walk wisely toward them that are without. Be a pattern of good works. Live for God. Live in full prospect of eternity.

"In vain men talk of living faith,
When all their works exhibit death ;
When they indulge some sinful view
In all they say, and all they do.

The true believer fears the Lord,
Obeys His precepts, keeps His word,
Commits his work to God alone,
And seeks Christ's will before his own."

A MISTAKE IN BUSINESS.

"As with the buyer, so with the seller."—
Isaiah xxiv. 2.

SOME have embraced the opinion, that business cannot be carried on in accordance with the rigid morality of the New Testament ; but this is a mistake ; for it can only be carried on safely and consistently, according to those principles. Except a man have the love of God in his heart, the precepts of God in his memory, and the fear of God before his eyes ; except he love his neighbour as himself, and keep eternity in view ; he cannot be a good, that is, a christian tradesman. Nothing is really lost by honesty, nor is any thing worth keeping gained by deception. If we bring God into our business, if we walk with Him in the counting-house, the warehouse and the shop ; if we endeavour to maintain a tender conscience, and commend ourselves to Him in well-doing ; things must go on well with us. We may be tried, deeply tried ; but God is our friend, He approves our conduct, and will manifest His approbation in His own time and way. He will bless us with His favour, which is life, and His loving-kindness, which is better than life.

But it is too often the case, that the precepts

of the Bible are required to give way to the maxims of men ; and the requirements of God, to the practices of the trade. " We must do as our neighbours do," is sometimes the language of professing Christians ; but unless your neighbours do as God directs in His word, you must not ; if you feel aright, you dare not : if they attempt to deceive, you must not ; if they practise imposition, you *must* be honest. Nor are you to be guided by the conduct of your customers ; God has given you a rule, and He expects you to walk by it ; and if you do not, you will be corrected for the neglect. God will not allow His children to sin with impunity ; you are not *of* this world, nor ought you to act *like* the world.

" As with the buyer, so with the seller." This is too often the case in reference to conduct ; each party tries to deceive ; the seller cries up his article, boasts of its excellence, and assures the buyer that he is selling it at a great sacrifice ; when at the same time, if conscience were to speak, it would flatly contradict the whole. It is a fearful thing to lie under any pretence, and every attempt to deceive is a lie. How few consider what God hath spoken upon this subject ;—hear from His own mouth His fixed and determined purposes ; " He that speaketh lies shall not escape." (Prov. xix. 5.) God will keep His eye upon him, justice will pursue Him, and punishment will overtake Him. " He that speaketh

lies shall perish." (Prov. xix. 9.) A liar cannot prosper ; for though he appear to do so for a time, there is rottenness at the root ; the displeasure of God will follow, and, without painful repentance, the end will be dreadful. He that lies in order to thrive, trusts in vanity ; and vanity will be his recompence. (Isaiah lix. 4.) " The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity, tossed to and fro of them that *seek death*." (Prov. xxi. 6.) Hear the liar's doom : " The mouth of those that speak lies, shall be stopped." (Ps. lxiii. 11 ;) they shall be speechless before the Judge. " And all liars shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone ; which is the second death." (Rev. xxi. 8.) Be not deceived : no liar can be a Christian, for it is written of all the Lord's people, " Surely, they are my people, children *that will not lie* ; so He was their Saviour." (Isaiah lxiii. 8.) The true Christian can say with David, " I *hate* and *abhor* lying ; but thy law do I love ;" (Ps. cxix. 163 ;) and will pray with him, " Remove from me the way of lying ; and grant me thy law graciously. (Ps. cxix. 29.) " Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every one truth with his neighbour." (Ephes. iv. 25.) Reader, do not attempt to evade the subject ; do not say that trickery in trade is not lying ; it is, and will be visited as such. A lie can never be necessary, it can never be justified ; do not therefore sell yourself to work this

wickedness. If the seller imitate the buyer in sin, he will be united with the buyer in punishment. "Lying lips are an *abomination* to the Lord ; but they that speak truth are His delight." (Prov. xii. 22.) "A lying tongue is but for a moment." (Prov. xii. 19.)

"Let those who bear the Christian name
Their holy vows fulfil ;
The saints—the followers of the Lamb—
Are men of honour still.

True to the solemn oaths they take,
Though to their hurt they swear ;
Constant and just to all they speak—
For God and angels hear.

Still with their lips their hearts agree,
Nor flattering words devise :
They know the God of truth can see
Through every false disguise.

They hate *the appearance of a lie*,
In all the shapes it wears ;
Firm to the truth—and when they die,
Eternal life is theirs.

Lo ! from afar the LORD descends,
And brings the judgment down ;
He bids His saints—His faithful friends—
Rise and possess their crown.

While Satan trembles at the sight,
And devils wish to die,
Where will the faithless hypocrite
AND GUILTY LIAR FLY ?"

THE WRONG PLACE.

“ Peter sat down among them.”—Luke xxii. 54.

Who sat down? Peter; one whom Jesus had called out of the world, and separated unto His kingdom and for His service. One who had been taught by the Father to know the character, and bear testimony to the dignity of Jesus. One who had been sent out to preach the gospel and work miracles, and who had rejoiced that the very devils were subject unto him through the name of Jesus. One who had been peculiarly favoured; as in the house of Jairus, on the mount of transfiguration, and in the garden of Gethsemane. One to whom Jesus had promised a throne in His coming kingdom, and who had been solemnly cautioned against yielding to temptation. One who was considered a zealous and determined disciple, whom none suspected, nor did he suspect himself.

What did he? “He sat down among them.” He was now in the High Priest’s house, before whom Jesus was brought as a criminal. He was surrounded by the enemies of His Master, who scoffed at his claims and thirsted for His blood. He was led hither by curiosity, desiring to see what would be the end of the present attempt

on his Master's life. He thus neglected the loving caution and exhortation of Jesus, who had said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice." "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." He was off his guard, and neglecting prayer; and now he sits down among them as though he was one of them, like a person at home with them.

What was the consequence? He was tempted. The temptation was too strong for him; he felt, he manifested his weakness. He fell—fell into the very sin against which he was warned; against which he had so warmly and zealously protested; fell in the presence of John, within sight of Jesus, before his determined and avowed foes. He repeated the sin, and at every repetition manifested more hardness and depravity. Poor Peter! where is thy courage, thy zeal, thy going to prison and to death? Satan desired to have thee, and he has thee now! How much better would it have been for thee, if thou hadst fled with the rest of thy fellow-disciples, or hadst remained behind in the garden to pray! But it is trial alone that will convince us of our fickleness and weakness.

Reader, take heed where you go. You are not alike safe in every place. "Go not in the way of sinners." Stand not in the council of the ungodly, lest you should at length sit in the

seat of the scornful. Peter fell by degrees ; so may you. Watch and pray wherever you go . you had need be always on the look-out for danger, and in prayer for divine keeping. When solicited to go into questionable places, think of Peter ; when invited to join worldly parties, beware. Be sure you are justified in what you do, and where you go. Ask seriously, Will God go with me ? For if God does not sanction you, if He does not go with you, you will be sure to fall. Ask again, Does the promise reach me here ? Have the angels charge over me, to keep me in this way that I go ? Ask once more, Did duty call me hither ? If it did, you may be safe, for you may look for and expect to receive the Lord's blessing.

Professor of religion, think of Peter ; and avoid the snare in which he was taken. It is recorded for your admonition, and it is intended to preserve you from falling. When inclined to join worldly parties, or to be present at carnal feasts, ask, "Should Peter sit down among them ? Will God be with me ? Can He approve of my going ?" And if these remarks should be read by one, who can occasionally frequent the alehouse, and sit down among drunkards, I must tell such an one, you are in the wrong place. Peter, weak as he was, would not go thither. Peter had not gone into the High Priest's hall but that his Master was there ; but you know your Master is

not in the alehouse. Can you think that the holy angels could bear to be there?—and if not you have not your keepers with you. (Ps. xxxiv. 7, xci. 11, 12.) If at any time duty should lead thither, holiness should prevent your remaining there longer than is absolutely necessary. Who do you find there? Swearers, liars, harlots, adulterers, and every kind of profane persons; they feel at home there, they have fellowship with each other; but shall Peter sit down among *them*? Heaven forbid it! Either give up thy profession altogether, or, “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing.” How differently the Psalmist felt to what you do; witness his prayer: “Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men.” Hear his testimony: “I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.”

THE BACKSLIDER'S RESOLUTION.

*"I will go and return to my first husband ;
for then was it better with me than now."*—
Hosea ii. 7.

NOTHING is more common than backsliding, and yet nothing is more criminal or cruel ; and he that is thus cruel, troubleth his own flesh, and spirit too. By the gospel we are espoused to Jesus, by grace we are united to Him, and when we profess religion we say, "I will be for thee, and not for another." I will seek my happiness in thy love, my supplies from thy fulness, and my direction from thy word. I will aim at thy honour, devote myself to thy cause, and surrender myself to be ruled and guided by thee alone. For a time the love of Jesus charms us, the appointments of Jesus delight us, and the authority of Jesus binds us. We walk with Him in peace and holiness. But listening to Satan, yielding to the working of unbelief in our hearts, or conforming to the present evil world, we gradually backslide from Him. Our private intercourse with Him becomes less fervent and frequent ; our thoughts of Him less interesting and sweet ; our concern for His glory decays, selfishness increases, and is fostered, and we leave our first love. The sin is

inexcusable, the folly great, and the consequences always painful, and sometimes fearful.

But here is one convinced of his folly, sorry for his sin, and determined to return. "I will go," and humble myself at His feet, and confess my crime ; I will seek to be restored to His favour and the enjoyment of His love ; I will ask to be again employed in His service ; I will beg to be received into His house. I am willing to be a servant, to do the meanest work, to be humbled to the lowest degree, If I may be but allowed to see His face, hear His voice, and once more enjoy His smile. He alone can satisfy me, His pardoning mercy alone can reach my case, and His gracious presence afford me comfort. I am wretched without Him. Emptiness and vanity are written upon every thing around me. I deserve to be banished from His presence ; He would be just if He sent me to hell ; but I must venture before Him, I must plead with Him, I must be again admitted into His favour, or I die—"I will go," though conscience accuse me, though His word condemns me, though Satan oppose me, though my heart misgives me, though saints slight and discourage me ; "I will go and return ;" for He was my husband, my joy, my delight, my all. I cannot live without Him, I can but die before Him ; but no—no sinner, not even a back-sliding sinner, ever perished at His feet.

"I will return unto my first husband ; for then

it was better with me than now." I remember the days of old, the season of my first love, how sweet, how delightful my experience ! Then the presence of my God raised me above my trials, and filled me with joy unspeakable ; then I had power over sin, and I could crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts ; then I enjoyed freedom from care, casting all my care upon Him, assured that He cared for me ; then I was indulged with discoveries of His love, which made it almost impossible to doubt ; then I found profit and pleasure in all the means of grace and ordinances of His appointment ; then I had joy and peace in believing. But oh ! how different has it been with me since ! Instead of the high-way of holiness, and the paths of pleasantness and peace, my way has been hedged up with thorns. Instead of holy contentment and inward satisfaction, I have had constant vexation and disappointment. Instead of plenty and prosperity, I have suffered poverty and adversity. It was indeed better with me once than now ; but my injured Lord, my long-suffering Saviour, my gracious God, is saying, " Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." And my heart says, " Behold, I come unto thee, for thou art the Lord my God." " O Lord, other Lords beside thee have had dominion over me ; but now by thee only will I make mention of thy name." Thus saith the Lord, " I will heal your backslidings, I will love

you freely, for mine anger is turned away from you. I will restore comfort unto thee and to thy mourners."

"Lord, I bow with deep contrition
Low before thy throne of grace ;
Heal me in thy kind compassion,
While I seek thy smiling face.

Where, but to a bleeding Saviour,
Should I come for life and peace ?
Nothing but thy boundless favour
Can my burdened soul release.

Thou hast witness'd my transgression,
Thou hast seen my load of guilt ;
Witness now my deep confession,
Thou whose precious blood was spilt.

Oh, this sin of cov'nant-breaking !
Canst Thou, wilt Thou, Lord, forgive ?
Shall I hear thy mercy speaking ?
Canst thou bid me look and live ?

Pardon, peace, and consolation,
At thy bleeding cross I see :
There I take my humble station,
There I give my soul to thee."

THE BACKSLIDER'S PETITION.

"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and uphold me with thy free spirit."—Ps. li. 12

BACKSLIDING not only dishonours God, but it strips the believer of his joy, and leaves him disconsolate and dejected. This was the case with David; he had suffered much, and he feared more; and looking back upon his past experience, he prayed for the return of his joy. He had been happy, for he had known the joyful sound, and walked in the light of the Lord's countenance. There is happiness in religion. The gospel is glad tidings of great joy. A knowledge of interest in all its privileges and blessings, causes us to joy in God; and its application by the power of the Holy Spirit, produces the most delightful effects. Guilt is purged from the conscience, peace flows into the heart, acceptance with God is realized, access to God with confidence is enjoyed, and heaven appears to be opening to the view.

But sin robs the soul of all comfort; the backslider cannot be happy. There may be a sense of want, but there is no feeding on the bread of life; there may be clear views, but there is no heart-warming appropriation; there may be the form of godliness kept up, but there is little of the

power of it known in experience. There is prayer to God, perhaps, but no fellowship with God. Christ is honourable in the judgment, but not sensibly precious to the heart. The life and savour of godliness is gone ; for these can only exist in connection with a clear eye, a tender conscience, an honest heart, and a holy walk ; unless we walk with God, we shall not savour of God. In such a state a backslider may be allowed to remain for some time ; but the Lord will look upon him again ; and this will produce painful convictions, cutting regrets, bitter remorse, and deep humbling of soul before God. Then the man sees his folly, feels his guilt, condemns his conduct, mourns over his condition, and pants for a revival.

Now the backslider prays, prays in bitterness of soul, prays for a restoration. He cannot comfort himself, he refuses to be comforted by others, and is only willing to be comforted by God. Now he feels that he can sin away his comforts ; but that none but God can restore them. This shows our weakness, teaches us our dependance, exhibits our folly, and corrects us for wandering from God. The joy of salvation is a gift from God, as well as salvation itself ; and though we may be saved by grace, we shall not enjoy our salvation, unless God anoint us with “ the oil of joy.” To feel that we are saved, to have the Spirit witnessing with our spirits to the fact, is joy unspeakable.

ble ; and it was for this the Psalmist prayed, and for this every backslider pleads.

But he seeks not only a restoration of joy, but the upholding of the Spirit of adoption ; his past conduct and the present experience taught him the need of the constant presence and power of the Spirit. His prayer now is, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." He perceives that his way is slippery, his heart is false, his corruptions are strong, his foes are watchful, and his temptations are powerful ; and he cries, Let thy free Spirit watch me, influence me, guide me, and preserve me from sin and folly. The Lord, who knows our need, has promised his Holy Spirit, and He warns us against self-confidence : but it is seldom that any thing but bitter experience convinces us of our need of His daily supplies.

Reader, are you a backslider ? Have you left your first love, and lost your sweet joys ? Are you convinced of your folly and your sin ? Do not despond, but pray. Yield not to fear, but mourn over your folly. Go to the throne of grace, place yourself before your injured Saviour, and encourage that sorrow which is unto repentance. Frankly confess your sin, do not palliate it or attempt to excuse it, for it is inexcusable ; but appeal to the mercy of your God, plead His promises to the backslider, hope in His word, wait His time, and He "will restore comfort unto you." Beware of sin in future ; keep a jealous eye over

self; be especially careful over yourself in reference to the closet,—there backsliding generally begins; but though it begins there, it never ends there. Do not despair, however keen your sense of guilt may be; but like Jonah, “look again;” with Ephraim, “bemoan yourself;” and with David pray, “Cast me not away from thy presence, take not thy Holy Spirit from me; restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit.”

“Oh turn, great Ruler of the skies,
Turn from my sin thy searching eyes,
Nor let the offences of my hand
Within thy book recorded stand.

Give me a will to thine subdued,
A conscience pure, a soul renew'd;
Nor let me, wrapt in endless gloom,
An outcast from thy presence roam.

Oh let thy Spirit to my heart
Once more His quickening aid impart,
My mind from every fear release,
And soothe my troubled thoughts to peace.

So shall the souls, whom error's sway
Has urged from Thee, blest Lord to stray,
From me thy heav'nly precepts learn,
And humbled to their God return.”

THE CHILDREN'S MARK.

“Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, you would love me.”--John viii. 42.

THE children of God are by nature sinners, even as others ; but by grace they are adopted into the Lord's family, and are renewed in the spirit of their minds. The Holy Spirit becomes their teacher, and God deals with them as with children. They are entitled to exercise confidence in God, for all they need ; to expect grace and comfort from God, as from a father ; and to live in friendship and fellowship with God. They are expected in return to exhibit the image of God ; to breathe the Spirit of God ; in all things to aim to please God ; and to hasten home to be for ever with God.

But the principle mark by which the children of God are known, is their love to Jesus. They are led to see the beauty of His person, the love of His nature, the design of His sacrifice, and the glory of His work ; and this always produces love to Him. They love Him for what He is, as God, and God-man : as the Mediator of the better covenant : as the present and everlasting Saviour of their souls. They love Him for what He has done, in bearing their sins, working out a righteousness for their souls, and calling them by His grace. They love His word, as the mirror,

in which His glory is seen ; as the record, in which His love is displayed ; and as the will, in which He has bequeathed His property to them. They love His ways, which lead from sin ; which are characterised by holiness ; and which conduct to happiness. They love His people, and esteem them the excellent of the earth ; they may be poor and illiterate ; they may be despised and hated by others ; but they love them, prefer their company, and cleave to them. They love them, because the image of Christ is stamped upon them ; and because they love Jesus. For wherever the image of Jesus is seen, or love to Jesus is manifested, there the love of the believer fixes." " By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments." And by this we prove that we love Jesus, when we love His people, His word, and His ways.

All the children of God love Jesus, though for loving Him, they may be called to part with their goods, lose their friends, and be stripped of their earthly comforts. They love Him more than these. They can give up these ; but they cannot give up Him. They can be happy without these ; but they cannot be happy without Him. Jesus is all their salvation, and all their desire. They are not ashamed to own Him, nor afraid to suffer for Him. They love Him, though they do not enjoy Him as they wish ; their daily grief

is that they love Him so little, that they so seldom enjoy His presence, that they feel so little of His love. They want to love Him not only supremely, but intensely ; not only really, but with all their hearts and souls. They feel as if they could never love Him enough ; and they long for heaven, that they may love Him without intermission, and without end. Their love to Jesus always produces high valuation and great esteem ; they value Jesus above comforts, wealth, yea, life itself ; they esteem Him above all in earth or heaven. It leads them to place implicit trust in Him ; they trust their souls in His hands, and rest their salvation on His blood. They trust His word of promise, and rely on His gracious Providence ; believing that Providence will bestow what His promise warrants them to expect. It issues in cheerful obedience ; they not only say, " Lord, Lord ;" but they do the things which He commands them. They acquiesce in His will, and desire to obey His word. They work, not like the slave, from fear ; but as children, from love. Reader, do you love Jesus ? You cannot be a child of God without loving Him. He says, " If God were your Father, you would love me." If you do not love Christ, God is not your Father ; and if God is not your Father, Satan is. How awful to hear Jesus testify, " Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do."

THE CHILDREN'S PRIVILEGES.

"Ye are sons of the living God."—Hosea i. 10

How much stress is laid by some, on their relation to certain great and noble persons ; but if it be an honour to be related to the noble, the rich, or the good, what must be the honour of the Christian !. "Beloved," said the Apostle, "now are we the sons of God." And, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ." To have God for our Father, is the greatest honour conceivable, and it is an infinite source of comfort and joy. For if God be our Father, He will love us with a strong and tender love ; He may try us, and hide His face from us, to correct us for our follies ; but He will still love us. Nothing shall separate a child from His love, or sever the bond that unites us to Himself. He will bear with our numerous and painful infirmities, because we are children, putting the best construction upon every thing. For, "Like as a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him ; He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust." He will accept our imperfect services, because we are but children. He knows our weakness, ignorance, and failings ; and He also knows our desire to please Him : and when we can only desire, He accepts the will for

the deed, saying, "If there be first a willing mind it is accepted, according to what a man hath ; and not according to what he hath not.

If God be our Father, He will provide for and take care of us ; making provision for us on earth, while He reserves our portion for heaven. Will an earthly Father leave his child to want, while he has plenty by him, and can supply him with the greatest ease ? He will not ; neither will our heavenly Father ; but He will supply all our needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. He will also protect us from all evils, spiritual and temporal. Sin shall not have dominion, Satan shall not overcome, the world shall not destroy, for God will protect. He will keep us by His power through faith unto salvation.

If He be our Father, He will reveal His mind and will to us for our comfort and salvation ; He may hide the mysteries of the kingdom from the wise and prudent ; but He will reveal them unto His babes. (Matt. xi. 25.) He will send the Comforter, even the Spirit of truth, who will guide us into all truth. He will also give us freedom of access into His presence with confidence : so that we may carry all our sins, sorrows, troubles, and temptations to Him, and lay them at His feet ; feeling that we have to do with a Father, one who loves us, pities us, and delights to bless us. He will bless us with freedom ; setting us free from condemnation, and giving us

liberty to enjoy His word, ordinances, and presence.

If He be our Father, He will make all things work together for our good : good things, as mercies, ordinances, and comforts ; bad things, as sickness, poverty, reproach, persecution, bereavements, death ; all shall work our good, and issue in our welfare. If we are children of God, we are heirs of every promise in His book, and joint-heirs with Jesus Himself. He will give us a Father's blessing, a blessing worthy of His greatness, majesty, and glory ; and He will keep us safe in every danger, from every foe ; so that we shall never perish, but possess and enjoy eternal life. Dear reader, are you a child of God ? Have you received the Spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father, in your heart ? Do you love Jesus ? If so, all these privileges are yours, with others too numerous to mention ; yea, all things are yours and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

“ God is my Father : then I see,
 All good, He will bestow ;
 In everlasting love to me,
 His mercies daily flow.

God is my Father : then I know
 I am for ever blest ;
 His counsel marks my steps below,
 And leads to endless rest.”

THE ALARMING SENTENCE.

“Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?”
—Luke xiii. 7.

No place is so dangerous for an unconverted person, as the church of God. It is to be feared that many join the church before they are truly converted; and yet very, very few, are ever converted after. Once under a profession, and you are expected to act up to that profession; if you are planted in the vineyard, you are expected to bring forth fruit. The owner of the vineyard comes and seeks fruit; He comes again, and again; and if He find none, He passes this solemn sentence, “Cut it down: why cumbereth it the ground?”

Let us look at this character a little. A fig-tree, or a professor of the religion of Christ. A fruitless fig-tree, or a useless professor; the leaves of profession; but not the fruit of holiness. Such can have no faith in Jesus, for faith will work: it is a fruit-bearing root: it will show its origin, nature, and tendency. Such have no love to saints, as saints, for love will act; it will feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the wretched, relieve the miserable, and spread the gospel. Love is a most powerful principle; a very active grace, an ornamental virtue, an acceptable fruit of itself. Such yield no hearty

obedience to God, for He requires fruit; fruit in the family, fruit in the world, and fruit in the church; and every fruitless branch He taketh away, and of every fruitless professor He says, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?"

It takes up the room which may be occupied by a better tree; it drains the ground of its nourishment for no good purpose: "*Cut it down.*" Labour is but lost upon it; means are useless to it; expectation is disappointed by it; therefore, "*Cut it down.*" "My patience and forbearance are wearied out; I have come three years seeking fruit and find none. The reputation of the vineyard is injured by it; so, "*Cut it down.*"

It is a fearful sentence. God gives the command to disease; the fever, the consumption, the apoplexy, or some other disease; He says, "*Go, cut that professor down.*" He sends death, like the woodman with his sharpened axe; he lays down the axe at the root for a little; at length he strikes the fatal blow; and then the fruitless professor falls. This command of God is fearful, it is full of terror, it includes utter destruction; it is irresistible, we cannot evade it, we cannot brave it out, the boldest spirit fails, the strongest body yields to "*Cut it down.*" It is final, there is all that is dreadful wrapped up in it, even a "certain, fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversary.

It is to be cut down and committed to the

flames. Here is wrath, fearful wrath ! Justice, awful justice ! Vengeance, the vengeance of an infinite God ! O fruitless professor, hear ! consider ! fear ! examine ! tremble ! repent ! God looks for fruit from every professor. He demands fruit of every one who has a place in His church. He will certainly punish if there be no fruit, and good fruit too. Just think, where is *that* fig-tree now ? Where will *you* be soon ? The axe lies at thy root even now. The executioner is only waiting the word of command. His eye is anxiously fixed on the Lord of the vineyard for orders : and were it not that there is an Intercessor, the command had been given before this. The dresser of the vineyard pleads, “ Lord, let it alone this year also : ” and you have hitherto been spared. But mercy will soon urge her last plea ; the year of reprieve will soon expire, and then “ Cut it down,” is all that remains. Oh, how awful the thought, to go to hell through the church of God ! To profess that you are travelling to heaven, when in reality you are going with the multitude to perdition.

“ Tremble, ye sinners, at His frown,
If barren still ye stand ;
And fear that keenly-wounding axe
Which arms His awful hand.”

AN OFFENSIVE QUESTION.

“Will ye also be His disciples.”—John ix. 27.

THIS question was put by the man whom Jesus had healed of blindness, to the Jews, and it stung them exceedingly; they despised the thought of being the disciples of Jesus. But it may, perhaps, be put to the reader, without giving so much offence. Will you, reader, be the disciple of Jesus? His wisdom is infinite, His power is omnipotent, His authority is universal, His beneficence is unbounded, His disposition is most gentle and meek. He has and does perform the most surprising miracles; He teaches the most important and valuable truths, He now sitteth at the right-hand of God, and he saves all His disciples with an everlasting salvation.

What say you? Will you be a disciple? If so, you must surrender yourself, and your all, unto Him; you must be ready to suffer with, and die for Him; you must be willing to embrace His doctrines, submit to be ruled by His precepts, imitate his example, and observe all His institutions. A good disciple is teachable and tractable, and loves His Master above all; he studies to know His will, watches His eye, waits upon Him, fears to offend Him, delights to please Him, confidently trusts Him, zealously imitates Him, cheerfully obeys Him, is most happy when fa-

voured with His presence, and will by no means leave Him ; but cleaves to Him with full purpose of heart.

Will you be His disciple? If so, you must obey Him ; you must do what He commands, out of respect to His authority, from love to His will, from deference to His wisdom, from zeal for His honour, with faith in His promise, fearing His frown. His commands must rule your heart and life, though your carnal nature may dislike them, though friends may persuade you to neglect them, though enemies may oppose and persecute you for regarding them, and though for a time you may suffer loss for attending to them.

Will you be His disciple? If so, you must unite with those who already sit at His feet, and they are, generally speaking, poor ; not many wealthy are called ; they are despised, for they walk contrary to the maxims of the world ; they are often deeply afflicted, “ For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.” If you will be His disciple, you must forsake all your present follies, vain companions, and carnal pleasures ; you must publicly profess your faith *in* and obedience *to* Him ; and you must engage to attend His worship and support His cause.

Young friend, will *you* be His disciple? Notwithstanding all that has been said, His disciples are happy ; yea, they are the only persons who

are happy. They may be placed in the most painful circumstances, and seem to be of all men most miserable ; but there is a secret something within which supports, animates, and cheers them at the worst. The Christian's worst, is better than the worldling's best. His disciples are all honourable ; they are the sons of God, they are kings in their minority, they are the heirs of God, to whom He has willed all his vast and eternal possessions. It will take a whole eternity, to enjoy all that God has given them, and the blood of Jesus has secured to them. His disciples are safe, for He throws around them the shield of his favour ; He places beneath them His everlasting arms ; and He keeps fixed upon them His piercing, sleepless eye. Thousands have entered His school, and been taught by His Spirit ; will you *also* be His disciples ? Abraham was ! David was ! Paul was ! Will *you* ? He says, " I am the Lord thy God, that teacheth thee to profit, that leadeth thee in the way which thou shouldst go." He never turned away one who sought to enter His school, nor was one ever rejected, because He could not teach them His lessons. He receives every applicant, and He makes scholars of all who enter. He teaches them to avoid sin, love holiness, find peace, walk with God, overcome their foes, and leads them all at length to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God.

THE AGED BELIEVER'S CORDIAL

“Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: and even to your old age I am He; and even to hoary hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.”—Isaiah xlv. 3, 4.

THERE is something dreary in the prospect of old age. When we think of the failing of all our powers, and every little trouble appearing too great to be borne, with a numerous train of ills from which the aged suffer, we shrink back from it, and desire, if the will of God, to go home before it arrives. But this is perhaps wrong; for God has made provision for age, as well as for youth; and He can glorify Himself by the well-tried Christian in the decline of life: and if so, we ought to be content, for is it not the great end of our existence that our God may be glorified in us and by us?

The passage of Scripture at the head of this piece, is the aged saint's cordial; it is intended expressly for him; and while he has an interest in all the other promises of the word, equally with his fellow-believers, he has an especial interest in

this. Let us look at the beautiful images employed. God is a *parent*, a kind and tender-hearted parent. He is peculiarly attached to His people, they are dear to Him, precious in His sight. His portion ; He prizes them above all creation. He is strong to sustain, to defend, and support them. His strong arm, tender heart, and watchful eye, are all employed for them ; and especially so in old age. The aged believer is a *child*. He is weak. He feels exposed and defenceless. He is timid and fearful. But the Lord, as a tender parent, engages to take him up in the arms of His power, and carry him in the bosom of His love. Like a lamb in the shepherd's bosom, on a cold and frosty night, borne across a bleak and snow-covered common ; so the believer, in the winter of old age, shall be carried in the bosom of his God, across the bleak and cheerless desert of time. He will carry him tenderly, hushing the weak one's fears. He will bear him carefully, so that nothing shall harm or hurt. He will soothe with gentle words, and encourage with kind acts, until He safely introduces him at home.

Dear aged Christian, you have nothing to fear, your God says, " Even to your old age I am He." I am your Father : your Friend : your solace : and your confidence. Look unto me ; even to hoary hairs, I will carry you. I will carry your person, your cares, your provisions, and your comforts. I will bear you up under all you feel

and fear. I will carry you through all that discourages or distresses you. I will deliver you from foes, fears, dangers, and death itself. Nothing shall by any means hurt you. My arm is strong enough, trust in it; my bosom is your resting-place; lean on it, *lean hard*: be not afraid, love dwells there, pity rules there, thy name is graven there. Trust me, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. I am with thee to save thee; I will do thee no harm myself, nor allow any one else.

“Hearken,” believer, thy God bids thee “hearken.” His words are true and faithful, He speaks to banish thy fears. He speaks to strengthen thy faith. He speaks to comfort thy poor drooping heart. He speaks, to clothe thy care-worn brow with the light of hope, with the cheerfulness which confidence imparts. Hearken to Him, not to unbelief: to Him, not to carnal reason: to Him, not to Satan: to Him, not to erroneous men. Hearken, it is your old Friend who speaks; it is the Guide of your youth who addresses you; it is your tender Parent who seeks to cheer thy heart. “As one whom his mother comforteth,” so doth thy God comfort thee. He is near thee, near thee every moment; He will carry thee, carry thee every step; He will deliver, deliver thee from every danger, trouble, and foe. He will not fail you, nor forsake you; but will soon set you down with Abra-

ham, Isaac, and Jacob, in His kingdom and glory. The way is right, though rough ; it leads thee home, though rugged : and thy God is thy strength.

“ Lord, in thy great, thy glorious name,
I place my hope, my only trust ;
Save me from sorrow, guilt, and shame,
Thou ever gracious, ever just.

Attentive bow thy pitying ear,
Let mercy fly to my relief ;
Be 'Thou my refuge, ever near,
A sure defence from all my grief.

'Thou art my Rock, thy name alone
The fortress where my hopes retreat :
Oh ! make Thy power and mercy known,
'To safely guide my trembling feet.

Preserve me from the fatal snare
Of secret foes, who plot my fall ;
And make my life thy tender care,
My God, my strength, my hope, my all

To thy kind hand, O gracious Lord,
My soul, I cheerfully resign ;
My Saviour God, I trust thy word,
For truth immortal truth is thine.”

THE TOUCHING PRAYER.

“I will say unto God, Do not condemn me ; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.”—
Job. x. 2.

LET us glance at the patriarch's state of mind. Communion with God was suspended ; he could not perceive the presence, nor enjoy fellowship with Jehovah. He cried, but obtained no answer ; he complained, but there was no manifestation of sympathy. The painful correction of a Father's rod were experienced ; he was smitten in his property, in his body, in his friendship, and what was worse, in his soul. He thought his God was become cruel unto him. Darkness surrounded him, gloom presided over his spirit, and despondency preyed upon his soul. Temptations vexed him, and the fiery darts of Satan inflamed and tortured his mind. He reflected upon the past, but it only increased his distress ; he looked forward to the future, but he saw no way of escape ; he looked up to heaven, but God hid His face from him, and he looked within, but all was perplexity and misery there. His soul was cast down within him, and he was afraid of all his sorrows. He longed for death, but it fled from him ; and every thing seemed intended to deepen

his distress. No one had so much patience, and no one had so much need for it ; for no one was so much tried. He knew not the cause of his sufferings, and his friends falsely accused him ; and amidst the whole he was panting for deliverance and restoration.

He saw the hand of God, and said, " It is the Lord ;" he at times condemned himself, and sought relief at the throne ; but one thing above all others he feared,—lest his God should condemn him. " I will say unto God, Do not condemn me." Do not account me wicked. Do not separate me from thyself. Do not always refuse me thy presence. Do not unite the curse to the cross. " Cast me not away from thy presence." " Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me." Afflictions sometimes indicate that God is displeased, that our way is perverse before Him ; by trials He contends with us for His own right, and against our improper conduct. To have a controversy with God, is always painful, and sometimes very distressing. But there is always a cause ; if God afflict, it is to reprove us, or prevent our falling by self-dependence, or to purify us and make us partakers of His holiness. A godly man in affliction will endeavour to search out the cause, in order that he may confess it, obtain pardon, and forsake it.

This subject affords us important instruction. If a holy man, like Job, dreaded divine condem-

nation, how much more may sinners ; and how fearful and dreadful it must be ! To be condemned of God is, of all evils, the very greatest ; and yet every one who doth not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is so condemned. Reader, are you condemned ? Did you ever enquire into your state before God ? Did you ever dread condemnation, and flee to Jesus to escape it ? If not, you are condemned. The law condemns you for breaking its precepts. The gospel condemns you for rejecting its claims, and refusing its provisions. Conscience will condemn you, and if grace prevent not, will be like a living, gnawing, devouring worm at your vitals for ever. Condemned ! What degradation ! Condemned of God ! Why this is Satan's state ! Condemned to be banished from God for ever ! This is the punishment of devils ! Condemned to suffer the *due* desert of your crimes ! Why this will last through eternity, and must be inflicted upon every member, power, and faculty of the entire man ! Condemned, what, by a God of love, under the sound of the gospel ! O misery of misery ! Condemned, and condemned for refusing mercy ! What madness must be in the heart, and what a pungency must this give to torment, what fierceness to the ever-burning flame !

Sinner ! I beseech thee stop, think, believe, pray, repent, embrace the Saviour, and escape such an awful doom. Stop this moment ; think

of your danger before you proceed another step ; believe the good news which thy God has sent thee ; pray for pardon, peace, and life ; repent of thy folly, and break off thy sins by righteousness. Tried believer ! Follow this example set thee by afflicted Job, go and fall down before thy God, and pray, “ Do not condemn me, shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.” It will ease thy mind, relieve thy spirit, and conduct thee to deliverance and peace.

“ Why should my soul despondent be
In the most trying hour ?
Though Satan spend his rage on me,
’Tis but a creature’s power.

Why should I dread Jehovah’s hand,
Though it might crush to dust ?
’Tis love that gives His arm command,
And in that love I trust.

Faith can convert the sorest ills
Into the greatest good ;
And turn the cup that malice fills,
Into the sweetest food.

Faith has an arm of skill and speed
To break the fiercest blow ;
Through hosts of fiends it can proceed,
And lay the mountains low.

Saviour ! did I this faith possess,
Though in myself a worm,
I should, through this victorious grace,
Surprising deeds perform.”

THE COMPREHENSIVE PROMISE.

“ In blessing I will bless thee.”—Gen. xxii. 17.

So spake Jehovah to Abraham, as if He had said, “ I will bless thee with the greatest blessings, to the utmost extent of blessing.” Or, “ I will bless thee like a God, who is infinite, eternal, and immutably the same.” This promise includes every blessing, for time and eternity ; all God can give or man receive. But was it intended only for Abraham ? Oh, no. It is a family portion. It was made to Abraham as the father of all them that shall believe ; and He left it in all its fulness, richness, and perfection, to every child in his vast family. Therefore, the Apostle says, “ So then they which be of faith,” (or all believers,) “ are blessed with faithful Abraham.” And again, “ Christ hath redeemed us, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ.” (Gal. iii. 9—14.) So that all who believe as Abraham did, are blessed as Abraham was. Now Abraham believed on the simple ground of testimony, because God spake ; and he manifested the truth and power of his faith, by seeking to please God supremely ; therefore he left his own kindred, birth-place, and connection, because God bade him ; he surrendered all to

God, and held all he had as the property of God. His one business was to obey and please God; and this is always the case, where there is real faith, the faith of God's elect, the faith of the operation of God.

Now all who have this faith, are heirs of this promise; to every one of them God is still saying, "In blessing I will bless thee." Such are blessed in Christ, the source and centre of blessedness; as it is written, "Men shall be blessed in Him." They are blessed just as Abraham was, in their *persons*, with a justification from all sin, by faith in Jesus; with friendship with God, who invites, accepts, and treats them as His friends;—with fellowship with God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in which stands the very essence of real religion;—and with protection, for God is their **SHIELD**, and their exceeding great reward. They are blessed in their *provision*; the Lord blesses their bread and their water, and blesses them with a contented mind, which is a continual feast; in addition to which, they have Christ with all His fulness for their portion, both in this world and in that which is to come. They are blessed in their *families*; not with an exemption from trials, but every trial is sanctified; and their families are under a blessing. They are blessed in their *efforts* to do good, the Lord approves of their attempts, accepts their feeble endeavours, and very generally crowns them with success. They are blessed

in their very *trials*: there is no curse in them, and they are made most useful to them; their losses, crosses, bereavements and perplexities, are arranged for their welfare, and work together for their good. So that they would not be so blessed, if they were not so tried: what would injure others, benefits them. The very curse of men is turned into a blessing. They are blessed all through time, in the article of death, and will be blessed to all eternity. Surely we may say of our God, “Whom thou blessest is blessed.”

How important to be heir to such a promise! Reader, are you? Can you claim it? Do you believe it? Are you realizing its fulfilment, and expecting it to be made good to you, day by day? What strong consolation it holds out. Let men curse me, revile me, and cast out my name as evil, my God says, “In blessing I will bless thee.” “I shall never think I can do too much for you, or be too kind to you. I will keep thee as the apple of mine eye, and I will hide thee under the shadow of my wing.” What a great obligation such a promise lays us under. How should we love our God who thus promises!—with what warmth and constancy should our affections ascend unto Him! How should we obey Him, with what care, with what concern to please Him, and disregard of the opinion of others? How should we endeavour instrumentally to bless others? Abraham was not only to be blessed, but

to be a blessing ; and very much of real blessedness consists in our being a blessing to others. How should we seek to realize, enjoy, and live up to our privilege ; for it is only so that we can honour our God, or render to Him again according to that which He hath done for us.

“ Happy the man whose bliss supreme,
 Flows from a source on high ;
 And runs in one perpetual stream,
 When earthly springs are dry.

Contentment makes their little more,
 And sweetens good possess'd ;
 While faith foretastes the joys in store,
 And makes them doubly blest.

If Providence their comforts shroud,
 And dark distresses lower,
 Hope paints its rainbow on the cloud,
 And grace shines through the shower.

What troubles can their hearts o'erwhelm,
 Who view a Saviour near ?
 Whose Father sits and guides the helm :
 Whose voice forbids their fear.

Let tempests rage, and billows rise,
 And mortal firmness shrink ;
 Their anchor fastens in the skies,
 Their bark no storm can sink.

God is their joy and portion still,
 When earthly good retires ;
 And shall their hearts sustain, and fill,
 When earth itself expires.”

THE STRANGE ANNOUNCEMENT.

‘ Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.’—Matt. xxi. 31.

WHAT class of persons could be referred to by our Lord when He uttered these words? Not the openly profane, or bold opposers of the truth; but those who professed it, and were employed, some of them, in expounding it to others. This language, strange as it may appear, is applicable to a large class of persons in the present day. They admit the inspiration of holy Scripture, and the truth of the doctrines preached by the servants of Christ. Many of them approve of preachers, and manifest their approbation by regularly sitting under the word. They give their sanction, and often pecuniary assistance to the cause. They assent to gospel requirements; but remain year after year unchanged, as to state and character. They have no deep, inward, painful sense of sin; they feel no real concern about a present salvation; but fancy all will be well at last; they neither fear the terrible justice, nor prize the sweet mercy of God; they come not to Jesus for life or salvation in the exercise of desire, prayer, and hope. They come to ordinances, but not to Christ.

They are at ease, though evidently unconverted. They talk of doing the best they can, and of God doing the rest ; but in reality they do nothing which God can either approve or accept. They read of being born again ; but never examine whether they are so born or not ; they hear of conversion, but never trouble themselves about it. If they are occasionally alarmed, they quiet their fears, by reference to the mercy of God ; and because God is merciful, they live as if they did not believe Him just. They admit others may be lost, but cannot think so badly of themselves ; and though they allow the word of God may be true when applied to others, they always plead as if they did not believe it would be in their instance. There are thousands of such persons in our country, and to all such the Saviour's words are strictly applicable. Reader, are you one of them ? Search and look, for your danger is imminent if it should be the case.

The publicans were the Roman tax-gatherers, consisting of the lowest and most depraved class of men. Harlots were common prostitutes, the lowest and most degraded class of women. But such, our Lord says, will enter into the kingdom of heaven before Pharisees, and proud easy professors. Open sinners are generally more easily wrought upon, for they have no covering or excuse for their sin. They have no self-righteousness to ward off the conviction ; they see it is

true that is spoken of them, and they flee to the refuge set before them. They are more generally converted, than those who have formed a shield of their religious duties and observances, with which they throw back the arrows of God's word.

My friend, the most dangerous state is to be gospel-hardened ; to be able to sit under the word year after year, or month after month, without feeling its power, or yielding to its claims. A decent outside is often a deceitful covering ;—what is within ? Is the Spirit of God there ? Is the power of godliness there ? Is the sanctifying grace of the gospel there ? If not you are but a whited sepulchre, and “ publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.” Gospel opposers often receive the gospel they oppose, and become monuments of its purity and power. We should never despair of such ; their enmity is often slain, and gives place to pure and holy love. We have more cause to despair of those who have been hearers of the word for years, who are externally moral and decent ; for to such very often the gospel becomes “ a savour of death unto death.” But there is still space for repentance, and a way of escape for thee, reader ; if a Pharisee, Saul, who was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, was converted, and became a champion in the Lord's cause, and a blessing to thousands of souls. We mean not that you should despair of mercy ; but that you should see your danger, and flee *at once*

for safety to the Lord Jesus, who casts out none that come unto Him. That gospel which you have neglected, still speaks to you ; it is still God's message to you ; in it He speaks to you, and says, "Come unto me." Beware of that spirit of cold politeness, which says, "*I go, sir ;*" but leaves the person under the power of sin, the slave of Satan, and the lover of the present world ; and if my reader has been one of those who have said, "*I will not,*" let me beseech him at once to repent, confess his sin, and he will find mercy.

"The gospel comes with welcome news,
To sinners lost, like me ;
Their various schemes let others choose,
Saviour ! I come to thee.

Of sinners sure I am the chief,
But grace is rich and free ;
This welcome truth affords relief
To *sinner*s, e'en to me.

Of merit now let others speak,
But merit I have none ;
For merit 'tis in vain to seek ;
I'm saved by grace alone.

'Twas grace my wayward heart first won,
'Tis grace that holds me fast ;
Grace will complete the work begun,
And save me to the last.

'Then shall my soul with rapture trace
What God has done for me ;
And celebrate redeeming grace,
Throughout eternity."

THE QUESTION.

“*Lovest thou me more than these?*”—John xxi. 17.

WE may, we ought to love our relations, friends, and neighbours ; but Jesus requires and deserves our highest love. He should be first in our esteem, for He is most excellent ; toward Him our veneration should be directed, for He is truly divine and glorious ; and to Him we should be most firmly and devotedly attached, for He is “altogether lovely.” Look at His life as recorded by the Evangelists, and see how just, punctual, prudent, kind, benevolent, and full of attention He was. In Him every virtue shone forth in its fulness and perfection, and in Him every attribute of God was to be discovered. Consider His teaching. He communicated His own ideas of divine subjects, which were just and correct ; but almost totally different from those of any other instructor. He opened the heart of God, and shewed us that it was love ; assuring us that He “so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” He clearly *unfolded* the most important and interesting of all subjects, SALVATION ; shewing us its nature and perfection, and how it may be obtained and en-

joyed. He, in a word, revealed all that we need to know as to the mind, intent, and purposes of God ; the state, condition, and destiny of man ; the way of escape from wrath, and of admission into the world of purity, beauty, and bliss.

But His infinite merit especially demands our love. He was great enough and pure enough to speak with God, and engage for the salvation of sinners ; and He was kind enough and meek enough to speak to and provide salvation for man. He can fill the space between an infinitely holy God, and depraved, polluted, and guilty man ; and by the obedience of His life, and the atonement which He offered in His death, He can bring them together on easy and honourable terms. He has reconciled the justice of God to the salvation of man, and He does reconcile the heart of man to the ways of God. He has removed every thing out of the way of our acceptance at His Father's throne, and He does remove every thing from our hearts which would prevent our approaching with pleasure there. Glorious Redeemer ! thy merit is boundless, and thy worth infinite and eternal ; who would not love thee, and love thee more than all things beside ?

Glance but for one moment, also, at what He bestows, and you must see at once His claim to our highest love. The very angels receive their happiness, security, and honour, from Him. His enemies, of the human family, are fed by His

bounteous hand, and preserved by His Almighty power. But it is His saints, more especially, who are indebted to Him ; He gives His Spirit to instruct them, His righteousness to justify them, His blood to cleanse them, His name to procure them acceptance at the Father's throne, His fulness to supply them, and all that the wisest head could devise or the kindest heart bestow. He gives grace and glory, with every other good thing under heaven.

And yet many do not love Him ; and of those who talk of doing so, it must be said that their love is *doubtful*. Not to God, for He knoweth their hearts ; but to the saints who desire that all should love Him, and love Him above all. Yea, to themselves, for they cannot say they love Him with an unwavering tongue. If they do love Him, their love is not strong, vigorous, and fruitful ; it is like a stunted shrub, which only tells of the barrenness of the soil. And many have good cause to doubt ; look at the neglected Bible, the slighted closet, the forsaken sanctuary, and the forgotten God ; they all say, "Thou hast left thy first love."

But love to Jesus ought to be put out of doubt. "This is the love of God that we keep His commandments." "If ye love me, keep my commandments." By a cheerful acquiescing in His will ; and by daily observing His commands, the whole of them ; and even when we must make

sacrifices to do so, we should put our love to Jesus out of doubt. My Reader, do you love the Saviour? Why do you love Him? Is your love warm, cheerful, operative? Do you love Him more than all things beside? Are you in doubt about it? Rest not until all cause for doubt is entirely taken away, lest that fearful sentence should fall like a thunderbolt upon you, "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed when the Lord cometh." Does he not deserve to be cursed? Surely if a man does not love Jesus who is altogether lovely, and who is his constant benefactor and greatest friend, his sin is as the sin of Sodom, flagrant and inexcusable.

"Do not I love Thee, O my Lord?

Behold my heart and see ;
And turn each cursed idol out
That dares to rival Thee.

Do not I love thee from my soul?

Then let me nothing love ;
Dead be my heart to ev'ry joy,
Which thou dost not approve.

Is not thy name melodious still,
To mine attentive ear?

Doth not each pulse with pleasure beat,
My Saviour's voice to hear?

Thou know'st I love Thee, dearest Lord,

But, Oh ! I long to soar
Far from the sphere of mortal joys,
That I may love Thee more."

LABOURING FOR REST.

“ Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.”—Heb. iv. 11.

SIN is restless, and the sinner cannot enjoy true repose. Even many true believers do not enjoy the rest which God hath provided for us under the gospel dispensation. Here the Apostle exhorts us to labour to enter into that rest. He refers to the first Sabbath to illustrate his subject ; this was God’s rest ; and the day was set apart for man’s benefit. Adam had to keep Sabbath in God’s finished work ; creation was finished, and God had demonstrated and displayed His glorious perfections. Jehovah appeared a complacent God, filled with satisfaction and delight ; having pronounced His work to be good, very good. All creation acquiesced in God’s will and man’s happiness ; all was lovely, obedient, and happy. Here was a beautiful garden, well furnished with all man could need, or really desire ; and it was given to Adam for possession ; here he was to keep Sabbath, and enjoy rest.

The rest of the Christian is in the finished work of Christ, as a Redeemer ; in which He displayed and harmonised all the perfections of

Jehovah, in the everlasting salvation of every believer. Here God appears complacent, filled with satisfaction and delight, rejoicing again in the works of His hands ; rejoicing over His people with joy, and keeping a Sabbath in His love. Here, on the cross of Jesus we see written, “ God is love ; ” we behold sin put away ; and by it all things are now arranged and directed, so that they shall work together for good, to all who love God, and are called according to His purpose. In the gospel, paradise is restored ; for all the sinner can want, the believer enjoy, or the most enlightened saint desire, is provided, presented, and made over to us. So that if we understand the gospel, it presents us with salvation and bids us keep Sabbath ; it provides for us that we may rest from fear, bondage, and apprehensions of danger, and rejoice in the Lord our God. The true gospel state, is a state of rest ; not from service, but from slavery ; not from duty, but from drudgery ; not in indolence, but in sweet activity. Rest in Jesus. Rest with God. Rest through faith.

The Apostle also refers to the rest of Canaan, which was promised to and set before Israel ; in which they were to find every thing prepared and provided for them ; and enjoy liberty, from the slavery of Egypt ; rest, from the toils of the desert ; peace, after conflict and victory over their foes ; and plenty, for feasting, sacrifice, and

daily food. So the gospel sets before us the rest of God, just as Canaan was set before Israel, and bids us enter into it and possess it ;—here is liberty, from the slavery of sin, Satan, and the world ; rest from legal toil and slavish fear ; peace, with God, with conscience, and with men ; and plenty, for food, atonement, and triumph : so that we may rest, rejoice, and praise.

But how few enter into and enjoy this rest. “ Let us therefore labour to enter into that rest.” Let us labour to ascertain our *title*, by making our calling and election sure ; let us labour to improve our knowledge for *possession* and *enjoyment*. Let us labour by prayer, which is wrestling ; by searching the Scriptures, which are a mine of wealth, which is therefore mining ; and by believing, which is running, fighting, working, and following hard after God. There will be difficulties, as tests and trials, but the rest is attainable. Paul would awaken jealousy, that he may stir us up to activity. “ Therefore,” he says, alluding to the Israelites who fell in the wilderness, “ lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.” Professors have fallen ; unbelief is the root, disobedience the blossom, and apostacy the fruit ; professors may fall, for none are safe but those who are in Christ, and enjoy the rest of our gospel Canaan, who keep Sabbath in the Redeemer’s finished work. Beware of discrediting or neglecting any part of God’s word, which is your

preservative and guide ; beware of presuming you are safe without a good foundation ; beware of departing from God either in heart or action. Look at the context, and you will see that the Apostle connects the word of truth, the eye of God, the great and good High Priest of our profession, the throne of grace, the solemn caution, and the fervent exhortation together, to preserve and keep us from falling ; let us therefore use and improve all for this solemn purpose

“ Lord, I believe a rest remains
To all thy people known ;
A rest where pure enjoyment reigns,
And thou art loved alone.

Oh then, my Saviour, make me know
That I shall enter in :
Thou canst alone the pow’r bestow,
And wash me from my sin.

Remove this hardness from my heart,
This unbelief remove ;
To me the rest of faith impart,
The sabbath of thy love.

O come, and drive each fear away,
Into my soul descend ;
No longer from thy creature stay,
My author, and my end.”

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.

“ The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.” Matt. xii. 41.

THERE is one sin which God never pardons, and but one : this sin is called THE SIN against the Holy Ghost. Many sins against the Spirit are forgiven ; but this is never forgiven. It was committed by some when our Lord was upon the earth ; they were convinced in their consciences, that He was the Son of God, the promised Messiah ; that His works were wrought by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit ; and yet they were so filled with malice and enmity against Him, that they said, He is an unclean spirit, and wrought His works by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. They blasphemed or spake maliciously and spitefully against the Holy Ghost, contrary to the verdict and stirring of their own consciences. Paul speaks of this sin in his epistle to the Hebrews (x. 26—31,) and represents it as a wicked trampling of the Son of God underfoot, and a wilful, despiteful opposition to the Holy Ghost. The sin can only be committed by those who have clear light in the head, and deep-rooted malice in the heart ; they know that Jesus is the Christ, that He is the only sacrifice for sin ; and yet they feel such enmity against Him,

that they speak reproachfully of Him, and would if they could, trample Him underfoot as the mire of the streets. It is the effect of the meeting of clear light and powerful malice ; when malice prevails, and the man manifests his hatred and perseveres in his sin. It is that presumptuous sin, for which no sacrifice is appointed ; and for which no pardon is offered in the gospel. It is a sin of which no one ever did repent in this world, and no one ever will ; for it is impossible to renew such unto repentance.

Many fear they have committed this sin, who would tremble at the thought of it ; who never approached near unto it. No one ever did commit it who feared he should, and prayed against it ; or, who feared he had, and mourned on account of it. When this sin is committed, the soul is quite given up, and then no one is so hated and dreaded as the Lord Jesus ; nothing is so loathed and abused as the glorious gospel ; no people are so despised and contemned as the saints of God ; and the deep enmity and malice of the soul seem especially directed against the person, office, and work of the Holy Spirit. Some such sinners may be given up to lightness, levity, and folly ; others to gloom, sullenness, and reserve ; others to covetousness, and love of money ; others to work all uncleanness with greediness ; all of them to hardness and impenitency of heart.

No one who believes the divine authority of

the gospel, who has any reverence for the Lord Jesus, or desires to be saved by Him, who is alarmed at the thought of having committed this crime, can have done so. For all such there is mercy ; to all such pardon is presented in the gospel. They may have acted wrong, yea basely, toward the Lord Jesus ; the most blasphemous thoughts against the Holy Spirit may have passed through their minds, so that they have trembled and shuddered at what was passing within them ; they may have been tempted to the most fearful, unnameable crimes ; these may fancy they have committed the most uncommon sin, and they may conclude, that there never were such singular, daring, and desperate wretches as themselves before ;—still for such there is mercy, for the unpardonable sin has not been committed yet. Indeed, if you had sinned that sin, Satan would not harass you as he does ; but being sure of your damnation, he would leave you to yourself, or only hurry you on to gross and abominable crimes “ All manner of sin and blasphemy is forgiven unto men ;” and if you confess your sin, reader, however vile, base, or uncommon it may be, God is faithful and just to forgive you your sins, and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness

THE ALL-COMPREHENDING ONE.

“ Christ is all.”—Col. iii. 11.

As all light is in the sun, and as the source of all our springs is the ocean ; so all blessings are in Christ and flow freely from Him. He is, He has, all the sinner does or can possibly need ; and the blessings the sinner needs, can be obtained nowhere else but in Jesus. Does he need pardon ? “ The Son of man hath power to forgive sins ;” He is exalted to give the remission of sins. He pardons all sin. He pardons every one who applies with confession, faith, and prayer. He pardons freely. He pardons frequently. He pardons without upbraiding. Does he need righteousness ? It is only by the obedience of Jesus, that any can be made righteous. He brought in everlasting righteousness. “ He is the end of the law, *for righteousness*, to every one that believeth.” His perfect work is the “ robe of righteousness ;” “ the righteousness of God ;” “ the righteousness which is” obtained, and enjoyed “ by faith ;” “ the gift of righteousness.” And by Him every one that believeth is justified at once and for ever, from all things. Does he need acceptance with God ? It is only through Jesus, who is the one Mediator : He introduces sinners to God ; by Him they have access, and they are accepted in Him, who is the BELOVED. Does he

need wisdom, or holiness, or redemption? Of God, Christ is made to every sinner who believes, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and by interest in Him and union to Him, every believer is complete. "Ye are complete in Him." A sinner can think of nothing that he really needs, but it is to be found in Christ; and all that is to be found in Christ, is to be obtained from Christ by faith and prayer.

Christ is all in reference to the saint. Without Christ we are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; but with Christ we are honourable, and happy, and rich, and clothed, and enjoy clear sight. All the saint can want in all circumstances, Christ is; and our daily experience very much consists in learning our need of Christ, and learning to make use of Christ. Is the Christian in darkness? Christ is "the Sun of righteousness," "the light of the world," "the luminary to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel." Is he in danger? Christ is his shield, and He says, "I am thy shield;" "above all taking the shield of faith:" the shield of reason, is argument, effort, or courage; but the shield of faith is the Lord Jesus; faith makes use of Christ to conquer every foe, quench every fiery dart, and overcome every difficulty. Is he diseased? Christ is the great, the skilful, the infallible Physician. He heals every believer. Heals as often as they are sick. Heals without

fee or reward. Is he in want? Christ is the bread of life, in Him are the wells of salvation; He has durable riches and righteousness; and the life which we live in the flesh, is by the faith of the Son of God, who hath loved us, and given Himself for us. Is he dull and lifeless? Christ is the resurrection and the life; His words are spirit, and they are life; He quickeneth whom He will. It is but for Him to speak, and our languishing graces revive, our spirits receive new strength, and we feel full of vigour and animation. Is he imperfect? In Christ is completeness. He can present us before the presence of His glory faultless; a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Reader, this subject is a *touchstone* Try yourself by it. Is Christ your all? Do you look to Him for all you need? Do you flee to Him from all you fear? Do you ask of Him all you desire? Do you daily pray to be found in Him? Is He the highest object of your love? Is He your trust? Do you determine with Paul to glory in Him alone? The subject is a *hand-post*, it directs us all to Christ; and directs us to Christ for all we need. It says, "None but Jesus, none but Jesus can do helpless sinners good." It says, "Jesus only, Jesus alone is all you want; look to Him, to Him alone, to Him for all you want, always and everywhere. Look to Jesus, and be happy and wealthy in Him."

EMPLOYERS COMMANDED.

“Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in Heaven.”—Col. iv. 1.

It is the glory of the gospel, that it is no respecter of persons; it benefits all, it injures none; it deals honestly with all, and teaches us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present life. It makes no excuse for sin; it treats not the rich as favourites; but it comes with a rule for every conscience, and a direction for every state. Here the Apostle speaks to masters; they may not be tyrants, for God requires them to be just; they are not to look upon servants as an inferior race of beings, nor to treat them with harshness; but to “forbear threatening, knowing that their Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him.”

Masters are to be *just*, not wishing or seeking to get rich by the poverty of their servants; they are to treat their servants as they would wish to be treated, if they were servants. They are not to conduct themselves as if they were irresponsible; they must give account of themselves as masters, and of their conduct to their servants, to God. The master must be just to God, not

only giving Him his *own time* himself ; but he must not bargain for the Lord's time with his servant, or oblige his dependants to rob God of His day. This is too often done. Many acquire habits, which require servants to neglect the worship of God ; and they expect that their servants will neglect their duty to God to serve them, and hold themselves guiltless ; but such are blinded by selfishness and partiality. It is not just to expect a servant to *sell* or *give* God's time, or neglect those duties and privileges which stand connected with the salvation of the soul.

They are to be just to their servants, not expecting them to work unreasonable hours, or to labour beyond their strength, or to give their time and service without a fair remuneration. Servants should receive what is equal to their talents, their services, and their wants. Masters are not to indulge in threatening language, but are to conduct themselves toward their servants with mildness, christian forbearance, and becoming respect ; not doing as they will, but as they should.

Employers should always bear in mind, that their servants have souls, that their souls are of immense importance, and that it is their duty, while they employ them, to seek their salvation. No servant, who lives in a family where there is one godly person, should ever be able to say, "No one cared for my soul ;" for every true Christian should care for the souls of others, especially for

those by whom they are more immediately surrounded. Masters, mistresses, you have a Master in heaven ; His eye is upon you, He is observing you when you engage your servants, and notices what you demand of them ; He is observing you when you require your servants to neglect His worship, to pamper your appetite ; He is observing you when you require your servants to practise deception for you ; when you bid them say you are from home, because you do not wish to be seen, the lie is yours, and is placed to your account ; He is observing if you attempt to “grind the poor,” in their wages, that you may more speedily become rich. “He respecteth not persons ;” He will call you to face your servant at His bar, and give an account in His presence of your conduct toward him. Act then toward your servants, as in the sight of God, in all things approving yourselves to God ; as in prospect of the judgment, as one that must give an account ; and be it your determination to give unto your servants that which is just and equal, “knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.”

THE SERVANT'S DIRECTORY.

“ Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear ; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.”—1 Peter ii. 18.

CHRISTIANITY is not only a friend to families in general, but to female servants in particular ; in former times servants were slaves, but the religion of Christ has broken the fetters, and set the captive free. But though they are freed from slavery, they are not freed from duty ; servants, especially christian servants, are directed, in the New Testament, how to conduct themselves in their situations, and toward their employers. Hear the words of the Holy Spirit to you : “ Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers ; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart ; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to man ; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.” Again : “ Servants, obey in all things your masters, according to the flesh ; not with eye-service as men-pleasers ; but in singleness of heart, fearing God ;

and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done; and there is no respect of persons."

Again: "Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed; and they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are believers and beloved, partakers of the benefit." Once more: "Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."

See how full and particular are the directions which the Lord has given you; and in observing them and regulating your conduct by them you will obtain respect, enjoy peace, and be crowned with the blessing of the Lord. You are to view the hand of the Lord in your present lot; and considering it to be His will that you should be a servant, you are to serve cheerfully, as serving Him while you obey your employers; being persuaded that if men do not prize or adequately remunerate you for your services, your Saviour

will. You know he has said, "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again." But if you neglect duty, or get above your station, or give yourself airs, as if you were your own master or mistress, He will visit your transgressions with a rod; He notices the insults offered to your employers, and treats them as if offered to Himself. If you cheerfully, honestly, and constantly obey all your employer's lawful commands, you honour God, adorn the gospel, and walk in the truth; and so doing, God will assuredly honour you. You are commanded to do whatsoever your employers require, if it is not sinful, and to do it heartily; not only when their eye is upon you, but also in their absence; considering yourself the servant of God, whose eye is always upon you, and whom it is impossible to deceive. He has promised you a glorious inheritance, and will bestow it of freest grace, upon all who believe and obey His word; but if you neglect your work, injure your master's property, idle away or misemploy his time, the Lord notices it, and will deal with you accordingly; for His promises were never intended to set aside His precepts; nor the relationship into which He has taken you, to raise you above His government. They aggravate your sins, but cannot dispense with your obedience. Your master is accountable for whatever is wrong in his conduct; and you must give an account of yours. If your master be an infidel,

you are to reverence him as your master ; and to be obedient to him while his servant, even if he is ill-natured and severe. Your master's conduct towards you is not your rule of obedience ; but the precepts of God are to be your guide, and His honour your aim. If your master is a believer, a member of the same church, you are not to fancy yourself his equal, or take liberties, because he is a brother in Christ ; but be more diligent, respectful, and concerned to please him. Your aim must be to adorn the gospel, or represent it as lovely, by its effect on your life and conduct ; pleasing, if possible, your employers in all things, not secretly taking or giving away any part of their property ; but be scrupulously honest as in the sight of God. The precepts of God being thus plain and strict, be particular as to what situations you enter ; always engage to have your christian privileges ; render your services valuable ; obtain and keep a character which answers to God's requirements, and you must do well.

AN IMPORTANT PRECEPT.

“ This we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.”—2 Thess. iii. 10.

THE Gospel is directly opposed to all sin ; and in proportion as we drink into its spirit, shall we hate sin, and regulate our lives by its precepts. Idleness is a sin. Man was formed for labour ; he is required to work, and the God who made him says, “ If he will not work, neither should he eat.” There always have been some idle professors, who seem to fancy that they were born to live upon the industry of others ; they creep into churches, plead their poverty, and by various artifices they impose upon the benevolent, and rob the industrious poor of what belongs to them. The alms of the church should be given to the aged, the sick, and the industrious poor ; and it is a sin if we allow our benevolence to sanction idleness. We either ought to know whom we relieve, or employ others to dispense our alms who will enquire into cases, and give judiciously. A good man would much rather work than beg ; it is always a pleasure to him to earn what he eats and wears ; but it pains him to be obliged to receive from others, and he is always grateful when he does. But some professors are never satisfied,

and therefore they are never grateful ; they speak and eat as if they thought the saints were under an obligation to them, because they profess religion ; they have the mercenary spirit of the slave, but are destitute of the generous spirit of the child.

We should beware, lest we encourage idleness on the one hand, or allow the impositions of the unworthy to dry up the streams of our benevolence on the other. Some seem to want an argument, to satisfy their consciences, while they live in the neglect of the exercise of benevolence ; and unworthy characters furnish them with one ; but such should remember, that the precepts of the gospel still bind them, even if their kindness has been abused. That what they have given has not been thrown away, for God looks at our motives, records our good deeds, and “ will not forget our work of faith and labour of love.” It is best, if possible, to employ the poor, if they are in health, or at least to offer them employment ; to visit them at home, and see if there is cleanliness and frugality ; for here, even some professors are very deficient. They would rather fold their hands, and spend their time in talk, than clean their dwellings or mend their clothes ; such must not be encouraged, it is a sin to do so. “ If they will not work, neither should they eat.”

Our attention should principally be directed to the aged poor, the sick, and those who have large

families with low wages, or insufficient employment ; there are plenty of such, who require and deserve our assistance. But as for those who dress above their station, indulge their appetites, and waste their time in visiting and talk ; such should be reprov'd, and be told plainly of their inconsistencies, first with gentleness and kindness, and if this has not the desired effect, then with sharpness, as those who live in sin because they love it. Let no one think that the precept at the head of this piece is unduly severe : it is not ; but it is absolutely necessary, and expresses the will of God respecting all idle professors. Work is pleasant to the industrious, and labour is always conducive to health ; it keeps us out of the way of temptation, and preserves from a thousand snares. No one can be happy who is not employed ; no one is at liberty to waste precious time ; talents were not given to be wrapped up in a napkin, and hidden in the earth ; all are to be employed, for themselves, or for others, or for the Lord. Idleness is a sin with which Satan was never charged, and of which every professor should be ashamed. If the precept was obeyed, idle professors would be very few.

“Those who to Christ for refuge flee,
Should in His footsteps tread ;
Our Prophet, Priest, and King, should be
Both trusted and obey'd.”

THE DISOWNED.

“ *Ye are not my people.*”—Rom. ix. 26.

THE Lord hath a people peculiarly his own ; this is clearly stated, and satisfactorily proved in the word of God. He loveth them. He approves of them. He rules them. He supplies them. He protects them. He honours them. For them He gave His Son, to die in their stead. To them He gives His Spirit, to sanctify and make them meet for glory. They are a favoured and a happy people. Many claim to be of them, who are not all like them. They would enjoy their privileges, but they do not possess their nature. They number themselves with them, but they will ultimately be separated from them. The Lord never did acknowledge them, and He will, by-and-bye, openly disown them. He now says to them, “ Why call ye me, Lord, Lord ; and do not the things that I say ? ” By-and-bye He will say, “ I know ye not ; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity. ” That is, “ I do not approve you. I never did approve you. Therefore depart from me. ”

But who are they who now presume, but will by-and-bye be rejected ? The *Pharisee* is one of them. He who is striving to purchase heaven

by his works ; who is proud of his performances, and fancies that God must think as highly of them as he does. The self-righteous Pharisee is one of the greatest enemies of our Lord : he is blind to the spirituality of the law ; ignorant of the true character of God ; a stranger to the wickedness of his own heart ; and practically rejects the holy gospel. He will not object to it as a part of the word of God ; but let it be unfolded and applied, and his opposition will immediately appear. They who reject the gospel, reject the Saviour ; and they who reject the Saviour, will be rejected of God at last.

The *formalist* will be disowned of God. He is nearly allied to the Pharisee. He will go through a round of duties, and hopes by so doing to satisfy conscience ; to please God ; and purchase heaven. But formal duties are but decent sins. They offend, rather than please God. They merit hell, instead of purchasing heaven. If God is worshipped, it must be in spirit and in truth. If He is pleased with our poor performances, it is when they flow from love to Him, are sprinkled with the blood of His dear Son, and are laid as a child's offering at His throne. If our services are accepted by a just and holy God, they must be brought to the throne by the way of the cross. The duties of the formalist are heartless, misplaced, and worthless ; and the poor creatures who fancy they are pleasing God, and

securing heaven by their lifeless duties, will hear Him say to them, "*Ye are not my people.*"

The *licentious* must be refused of God. He loves sin. He lives in direct and open opposition to God ; for him there can be no hope. His head may be full of light, but his heart is enmity against God. He may talk very correctly about truth, but his walk gives his profession the lie. He has never been sanctified, and therefore cannot be glorified. The heart must be changed, and the life must be holy, or we are not God's people. He will not own us. He will not honour us. He will not receive us. Reader, beware of false confidence ; many take it for granted that they are God's people, but will find themselves woefully deceived. Look well to your evidences. Is the heart changed ? Is the life holy ? Do you walk with God ? Only those who walk with God on earth, will be owned as His at last. Look well to your title. Make your calling and election sure. Put your religion out of doubt. So walk, that all may be constrained to say of you, " If there is a Christian, that man is one." Remember, all are not Israel who are of Israel ; nor are all God's people who pass for such. Let no man deceive himself, or fancy he is safe while his heart and life are unholy ; for " without holiness *no man* can see the Lord." " Let no man deceive you ; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as Christ is righteous." (1 John iii. 7.)

THE ACKNOWLEDGED.

“ There shall they be called the children of the living God.”—Rom. ix. 26.

WHAT an unspeakable privilege, to be a child of God, and to be acknowledged as such ! But every real believer is a child ; God is his Father, the Lord Jesus calls him brother, and heaven, our Father’s house, is to be his home. But let us not deceive ourselves, and take it for granted that we are children of God, when we are not : all the children of God are born of God, and are partakers of the divine nature. They were dead in sin, but have been quickened by the Holy Spirit, and made alive to God : they are a new creation, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. They are adopted into the Lord’s family, and receive the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father : they realize reconciliation to God, and feel that there is nothing between God and their souls but love. Sin is pardoned ; guilt is gone ; peace with God is felt ; the promise is believed ; and they know God as a covenant God ; they love Him ; they believe His word ; they fear to displease Him ; they have fellowship with Him ; they obey Him ; they delight in holiness ; and they expect every blessing, because God is their Father, and hath promised to give them in His word.

They are registered among the family, for their names are in the book of life ; they are named in the will of the great Testator ; and are appointed to glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life. But how are the children of God to be known ? By likeness : “ God is love ; ” and every child of God is like Him. They love him supremely, and all whom he loves. By their conduct : they imitate God as dear children, in holiness, righteousness, and benevolence. By their attachment to His family : they love all the saints as their brothers and sisters in Christ ; and love them for Christ’s sake because they belong to Him and are like Him. By their regard for His house : they are at home in His ordinances ; to them the Sabbath is a delight, and the services of the sanctuary a pleasure. By the value they set upon His word : it is a family book, here the children’s registry is found, here every one’s fortune appears, here every one’s duty is pointed out, here the history of the family is preserved ; and they value and love the book. By their panting for home : this is not their rest, nor their portion ; they often long for home, where their brethren meet, their Saviour reigns, and their God is for ever glorified.

They are called the sons of the living God Who calls them so ? God, in His word, and acknowledges them as such at His throne. Ministers, who are sent to inform them, encourage

them and exhort them to duty. Saints, to whom they appear as the excellent of the earth, the children of a king. Angels acknowledge them too, and minister unto them as the heirs of salvation. The world will, by and-bye, when they appear in their glory, being introduced into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Reader, aim to realize your relationship. Are you among the children of God, or the children of the devil? There are but two families, and to one of them you do, you must belong : which is it? Christian, improve your relation at a throne of grace : remember it when you are in the world, lest you dishonour it : act according to it, especially in the church of God. Consider the honour it involves ; the blessings it secures ; and the glory to which it entitles.

“ On thee, O God of purity,
I wait for hallowing grace ;
None without holiness shall see
The glories of thy face.

But, as for me, with humble fear
I will approach thy gate ;
Tho’ most unworthy to draw near,
Or in thy courts to wait ;

Trusting to thy sufficient grace,
In Jesus freely giv’n,
I worship toward thy holy place,
And lift my eyes to heav’n.”

PRAYER

“ *Men ought always to pray.*”—Luke xviii. 1.

PRAYER is an important duty ; and to the child of God, possessed of the Spirit of adoption, it is a delightful privilege. To call God Father, to pour out the heart before Him, to have communion with Him, is sweet indeed.

The only proper *object* of prayer is Jehovah, as the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, God : as a kind and gracious Father in Jesus, as inviting us to His throne, waiting to bless us, and ready to pardon sin.

The only *medium* of acceptable prayer is Jesus ; Jesus as Mediator between God and man. He stands between God and sinners. He interposes His precious blood, and God is well pleased with all who come through Him. No acceptance for sinners, but through Jesus ; no rejection of any sinner who comes in His dear name.

The *kinds* of prayer are several ; as mental, when the soul prays without the voice ; vocal, when the voice and soul are both employed ; private, when we are alone with God ; family, when we collect our domestics, and plead with God for them ; public when we draw near to God in the assembly of His saints ; ejaculatory, when we

send up the brief petition in the field, the street, the shop, the work-room, or any other place.

The *rule* of prayer, is God's word ; here we may learn what God is willing to give, from His promises, His precepts, and the history of His saints : to God's word we must add, our own wants ; for we do not always need exactly the same things ; so that while God's word tells us what God is willing to bestow generally, our own wants will direct us what to pray for particularly, at any one time.

The *pleas* to be used in prayer are, principally, the name of Jesus, for it is to prayer in His name, that the promise is made. We must ask for His sake ; because He is worthy ; because He obeyed the law, and suffered in our stead. We may add the mercy of God, and plead for His mercy's sake ; so also his faithfulness, and ask because He is faithful to His word ; we may mention what He has done for us before, and for others similarly circumstanced, for so did the saints of old.

Our *assistance* in prayer, is from the Holy Spirit ; He teaches us our wants, brings the promises to our minds, stirs up our affections, whispers Abba, Father, and produces the unutterable groaning.

Our *obligation* to pray, is founded in the relation in which we stand to God ; the duties we have to perform ; the sins we have committed ;

the command of Jesus; the promises made to prayer; and the state of the world, the church, and our own souls.

As to the *nature* of prayer, it is the child's application to a Father; misery's appeal to mercy; the creature addressing his Creator: the sinner approaching his gracious God: and the needy seeking relief.

The *encouragements* to prayer, are almost endless. The comfort enjoyed; the holiness derived; the evils prevented; the blessings obtained; the promises given; the history of Abraham's servant, Jacob, Hannah, Jabez, Elijah, and a whole host besides.

It is truly *important* that we should pray always, or give ourselves unto prayer, as to our proper business; our sweetest pleasure, our principal resource, "Praying always, with all prayer"

"Pray'r was appointed to convey
The blessings God designed to give;
Long as they live should Christians pray,
For only while they pray they live.

The Christian's heart his pray'r indites,
He speaks as prompted from within:
The Spirit his petition writes,
And Christ receives and gives it in.

If pain afflicts, or wrongs oppress;
If cares distract, or fears dismay;
If guilt deject, if sin distress;
The remedy's before thee—PRAY"

THE HINDRANCE TO PRAYER.

“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.”—Ps. lxvi. 18.

WE ought not to be satisfied with praying, but expect that God will hear us, and look out for His answer. If we pray aright, we pray for what we really want, ardently desire, and cannot be holy or happy without: and if we pray for such things we must desire, and ought anxiously to expect our God to bestow them. He has promised. He is faithful. He ought to be believed. But this cannot be, except we expect Him to hear and answer our prayers. The Lord loves to hear us pray, and He loves to answer our prayers. Do you believe this? Some may say, “Yes, but there are so many hindrances to prayer.” True: but there is but one effectual hindrance to the success of your prayers; if you love sin, God will not hear you; He cannot hear you, for He hates sin with perfect abhorrence.

A deep sense of your own unworthiness is no barrier to success. You may feel unworthy to lift up your eyes to heaven, as the publican did; and yet obtain answers to your prayers. You may feel yourself to be only dust and ashes, as Abraham did; and yet plead with God and

prevail. You may feel like the prodigal, only fit to be treated as a menial ; and yet find acceptance with God as a son. A sense of unworthiness becomes us, it is profitable, provided it be not associated with unbelief. *The weight of afflictions* will not prevent success, though it may press you down, and fill you with distress. Who more burdened than Jacob, on the plains of Peniel ? And yet who more successful than he ? Was not the Psalmist deeply afflicted ? Yet the Lord accepted his prayers, answered his petitions, and delivered him out of all his troubles. *Temptations* cannot prevent success. They may confuse the mind, terrify the conscience, and trouble the heart ; but our God distinguishes between the injections of the enemy and the weakness of his child. If tempted not to pray, pray the more. If tempted to postpone prayer, pray at that very time : most probably God has a blessing for you : Satan suspects he has, or he would not be so anxious to persuade you to put off prayer. Pray most, when tempted not to pray. *The want of gifts* cannot hinder success in prayer : else the gifted hypocrite would be heard, and the ungifted saint rejected. The Lord looketh at the heart. He is not pleased with the tones of a man's voice, moved by the eloquence of a man's lips, or affected by the order of a man's sentences : He regards the sincere desire, the ardent longing, the heartfelt cry. If the heart be honest, if the desire

be sincere, if the motive be pure, He will hear, though the voice be harsh, the language broken, and the sentences disjointed.

But there is one thing that will hinder, effectually hinder success—it is sin: the love of sin: sin regarded in the heart. It may be a hidden sin, as enmity against a brother; envying another's prosperity; covetousness; pride; hard thoughts of God; or unbelief. But if sin is loved, indulged, or regarded, God will not hear us. We may ask, but we shall not receive, because we ask amiss; therefore the Apostle exhorts, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." (James iv. 8—10.) Prayer and repentance must go together. If an impenitent sinner could pray, God would not hear him, because he regards iniquity in his heart; if a praying soul falls, so as to indulge in, and love sin, his prayers are of no avail,—God will not hear him. Examine yourself therefore. Ask, How is my heart disposed toward sin? As we are disposed toward sin, so is God disposed toward us. If we love sin, "He hateth all the workers of iniquity." If we hate sin. "He honoureth them that fear the Lord." "The prayer of the upright is His delight."

PRAYER FORBIDDEN.

“ Let it suffice thee ; speak no more unto me of this matter.” Deut. iii. 26.

WE are sometimes very anxious, for what God is not willing to bestow ; He will supply all our wants, but He will not grant all our wishes. He will give us that which is good, though He deny us that which is gratifying. Moses was very desirous of entering into the promised land ; but the Lord had determined to correct his sin ; he had prayed and had been denied ; he is inclined to persevere ; but the Lord says, “ Speak no more unto me of this matter.” Even Moses cannot prevail. Yea, he is forbidden to pray on the subject. So may we on some points. Elijah prayed that he might die ; David prayed for the life of his child ; yet both were denied. So if we pray for health, wealth, ease, or shining gifts ; the Lord may deny, and yet be faithful to His word. He never promised to answer carnal prayers, or to give what would do us harm. Therefore, when we ask for any thing not positively promised, it should always be in submission to the will of God. He always wills our good, and His love rules over our destiny.

But though the Lord may refuse us some

things, and even forbid us to pray for them, yet He has promised us enough to satisfy us if rightly employed. Let it, therefore, suffice thee, believer, to live upon the promises of thy God ; for in them there is enough. Are you *sick* ? He saith, “ I will make all thy bed in thy sickness.” He will perform the part of a kind and attentive nurse ; soothing thy soul while thy body suffers, and supporting thee under thy burden of affliction. Are you *poor* ? He says, “ I am thy portion.” The wealth of Diety is thine. God is the portion of thine inheritance, and of thy cup, He maintaineth thy lot. Are you *weak* ? He says, “ I am thy strength.” “ I will strengthen thee.” And He will be as good as His word. He will give strength equal to the day. Are you *tempted* ? He will with the temptation make a way for your escape. Look to Him, and your refuge is certain. Trust in Him, and deliverance is sure. Are you *friendless* ? He says, “ I have called you friends.” And He will perform the part of a friend. He will counsel, relieve, and comfort you in every trouble and distress ; and will never fail you nor forsake you. Are you *bereaved* ? He asks, “ Am I not better to thee than ten children, or husbands, or wives, or whatever you have lost ?” He can fill every relation, and more than make up for every loss. Are you *aged* ? He says, “ Even to your old age I am He ; and even to your hoar hairs will I carry

you : I have made, and I will bear ; even I will carry, and will deliver you." " Let it suffice thee, I have promised, and I will perform. If I deny what you ask, I will give you something better. I will make all things work for thy good ; therefore, be not anxious, complaining, desponding, or foreboding."

Thus you see there is enough promised. Enough to support us, comfort us, and carry us safe home : and if we have all we want, ought we not to be satisfied, though we do not have all we wish ? The Bible is the directory for prayer : it tells us what to pray for, how to pray, and what to expect from the Lord. No one ever had all he desired in this world, and yet every Christian has confessed, " There hath not failed one word of all that our God hath promised." Let us therefore pray for what our God hath promised ; be satisfied with what He is pleased to bestow ; remembering that " this is the will of God, even our sanctification." If, therefore, our will runs in the channel of God's will, if we seek our sanctification principally, we shall never be disappointed, nor hear Him say, " Speak no more unto me of this matter."

" Help my infirmities, I pray,
My ignorance remove ;
O smile my darkness into day,
And fill me with thy love."

THE WIDOW'S WARRANT.

"Let thy widows trust in me."—Jer. xlix. 11.

THE state of the widow is painful, and calls for pity and strong consolation ; such the Lord manifests and has provided. Having removed her head, who was her adviser—provider—comforter—companion, and stay, she appears exposed to the designs of the oppressor, the frowns of an unfeeling world, and the malicious darts of Satan ; but the Lord is the widow's Friend, and has made many sweet and invaluable promises to her in His holy word.

To every widow who believes in Jesus, every promise that is confirmed in Christ belongs ; but some of those promises are hers in a special and particular sense. Of such the Lord speaks in the short portion before us now : it is short, because He would not burden her memory ; it is comprehensive, because He would include all her wants. My widowed sister, the God who has taken away thy husband, proposes Himself to fill his place. He says, "Thy Maker is thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is His name, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." Look at Him in His greatness, glory, kindness, wealth, and tender love ; and hear Him say, "I am thy husband." "I will never leave thee. I will never neglect thee. I will never turn away from thee from doing thee

good." He proposes to perform a husband's duties. He will provide for thy every want. He will protect thee from every danger. He will defend thee against every foe. He will counsel thee in every difficulty. He will comfort thee under all thy sorrows. He will be better to thee than any earthly husband. He will more than make up the loss thou hast sustained. He directs thee into the way of peace. "Let," He says, "thy widows trust in me." "I give them my word, my word of promise, the word of the oath. My word, which is stronger than the pillars of heaven, and durable as the days of eternity. I refer them to my character. I have always been faithful and true. I have never falsified my word, or despised a widow's prayer. I welcome them to my throne. There I meet the praying widow, and I meet her on purpose to bless her. There I remove her burdens, dry up her tears, cheer her heart, and grant her according to her faith. I promise to attend to her request. I will not refuse a widow. I will not deny her a blessing; but I do for her exceeding abundantly, above all that she can ask or think. I will always be her friend; others may change or fail her, but I never will; I will be to her a God, and do for her all a God can do."

"Let thy widows trust in me." This amounts to a *command*, as when He says, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers." Thy God

commands thee to trust in Him. It is a *warrant*, as when His servant says, "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace." Thou art fully *warranted* to trust in thy God at all times, in all places, for all that He has promised, or thou dost really need. It is an *exhortation*, as when Paul exhorts, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith, without wavering, for He is faithful who promised." Thou art *exhorted* to trust in thy God, instead of yielding to fear, dwelling on the past, or doubting about the future. It is a *caution* as when the Lord says, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." He *cautions* thee not to trust in a friend, to put no confidence in a guide. Trust not in man, however good or great; but "trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah, there is everlasting strength." Expect but little from the creature; at best he is but a broken cistern; expect every thing from thy God, for He is "the fountain of living waters." Ask every godly widow you know, if her God has been faithful or no. Ask her, if she has ever been disappointed when she trusted in, and expected from her God. Ask her for her testimony, and she will doubtless say, "Not one thing hath failed of all that the Lord my God has promised." Or, "Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word." Then yield not to fear, listen not to Satan, for the eternal God says, "Let thy widows trust in me."

THE FRIEND OF THE FATHERLESS

"In thee the fatherless findeth mercy."—
Hosea xiv. 3.

It is a painful affliction to be deprived of a father, especially of a wise, judicious, and kind father; yet it is a common calamity. There are now thousands of families that have no head, and tens of thousands of children who have no father. To them the Lord speaks in His word, and proclaims Himself the "Father of the fatherless, and the judge of the widow." To them He condescends and proposes to fill the father's place, saying, "Wilt thou now from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth." He is "the helper of the fatherless." In Him "the fatherless findeth mercy." They have lost the parent whose business it was to care for, guide, educate, comfort, protect and train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. No other creature can fill a father's place, but the Lord can. He has a father's heart and a father's eye; and "He relieveth the fatherless and the widow." He is that suitable friend, that present help, that wise counsellor, which they need; and He has mercy for the fatherless.

They stand especially in need of mercy, and

He has every variety of mercy, which He will illustrate and display in the experience of every fatherless child which seeks Him in sincerity and truth. Men may appear deficient in mercy, even toward the fatherless ; but God, our God in Jesus, will display the greatest kindness and compassion to such. This renders Him so amiable, suitable, and glorious in the estimation of His people who know Him ; it is His sweetest attribute, beautiful as the morning light, measureless as the waters of the ocean, boundless as illimitable space, refreshing as the early dew, and glorious as the noon-day sun. Mercy is like His nature, pure, lovely, and eternal. Mercy is suited to all the wants of the fatherless ; it is free, full, and meets every case.

Reader, art thou a fatherless child ? The Lord speaks to thee, He assures thee He has mercy for thee, He gives thee His word that thou shalt find mercy in Him. He has pardoning mercy, which will suit thy sinfulness ; mercy that will blot out thy sins, and remove them from thee as far as the east is from the west. He has delivering mercy, which will meet thy misery ; mercy which will deliver thee from the power of sin, the bondage of Satan, the curse of the law, the fear of death, the terrors of judgment, and all the troubles which may fall upon thee on earth. His mercy is tender mercy, which will suit thy sickness, the sickness of thy soul. He will sympathise

with thee, pity thee, and manifest the greatest forbearance and love. His mercy is so tender, that it will not break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax. It will encourage the weak desire, fan the feeble spark into a flame, and take the will for the deed. His mercy is supplying mercy, to meet your wants and defects. It will supply all your needs, according to His glorious riches, which are in Christ Jesus. Whether thy wants be temporal or spiritual, He will supply thee. He will give thee grace and glory; and no good thing will He withhold from thee, if thou walkest uprightly. It is also sanctifying mercy, to suit your impurity. It will wash you in the laver of the word, and in the fountain of a Saviour's blood; it will teach you to wash your robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. It will sanctify your troubles, and make all things work together for your good. It is rescuing mercy, which will appear for you, and deliver you from all the dangers which may line your way, and at last present you faultless before the throne of God. In a word, it will meet every case, circumstance, and condition in which it is possible for you to be placed; and it will more than fill a father's place. Reader, will you not seek this mercy? It is in God. It is promised. It is for the fatherless, yea, for all who are destitute. Oh, may you *obtain* this mercy! Or, if you have obtained mercy, let me exhort you to dwell much

on this excellent attribute of your God. Review God as all-sufficient in every state. To plead mercy against your dejection, and to trust in the mercy of the Lord for ever. May we all imitate our God, who is the friend of the fatherless.

“While thus I seek protecting power !
 Be my vain wishes still'd ;
 And may this consecrated hour
 With better hopes be fill'd.

Thy love the powers of thought bestow'd ;
 To thee my thoughts should soar ;
 Thy mercy o'er my life has flow'd :—
 That mercy I adore !

In each event of life, how clear
 Thy ruling hand I see !
 Each blessing to my soul how dear,
 Because conferr'd by Thee.

In every joy that crowns my days,
 In every pain I bear,
 My heart shall find delight in praise,
 Or seek relief in prayer.

When gladness wings my favour'd hour,
 Thy love my thoughts shall fill :
 Resign'd when storms of sorrow lower,
 My soul shall meet thy will.

My lifted eye without a tear,
 The low'ring storm shall see ;
 My stedfast heart shall know no fear :—
 That heart shall rest on Thee.”

THE SINGLE CHRISTIAN'S RULE.

"She is at liberty to be married to whom she will, only in the Lord."—1 Cor. vii. 39.

THIS, though spoken of widows, is the law of Christ in reference to all unmarried Christians, and is imperatively binding upon them. To slight it, is to slight the authority of Christ; to reject it, is rebellion against the King of kings and Lord of lords; and to act contrary to it, is to ensure sorrow, grief, and woe.

Celibacy is not sanctity, though it may under some circumstances be preferable to marriage; it is not required by the gospel, and in many instances cannot be approved by the Lord. Marriage is lawful, for God instituted it; it is honorable, for God commends it; it is desirable, for God blesses it; it is instructive, for God speaks by it; it is profitable, for thereby we become helpers of each other; and it is sometimes necessary for the prevention of sin.

But it must be according to the law, "*only in the Lord.*" A Christian may only marry a Christian, for he is to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." It is not enough for the party to be moral, for morality is not religion; or an atten-

dant on the means of grace, for many attend to whom the gospel is a savour of death unto death ;” or a hopeful character, for of many it may be said, “ They are not far from the kingdom of God,” but they never enter it. It must be a true believer, one who is born again by the Holy Spirit, who is in the Lord. That is, a person vitally united to the Lord Jesus ; who lives upon Christ ; who walks with Him in faith and holiness ; who is not ashamed to profess Him, nor afraid to confess Him before men ; who adorns the doctrine of Christ his Saviour ; a Christian not in word only, but in deed and in truth : and with no other can a believer unite in accordance with God’s word, under the approving smile of the Holy Spirit, or with scriptural ground to expect the Lord’s blessing.

This law of Christ is plain ; no one can misunderstand it, but from wilful blindness. It is imperative ; it does not give leave to any one to qualify it, or excuse himself from conforming to it : if you are a Christian, you are solemnly bound to observe it ; and it is as much a crime to marry an unconverted person, as to steal, or to violate any one of the ten commandments. It is indispensable ; no one has authority to set it aside, or to say, “ I am not bound by it.” If a Christian, you are bound by it, and woe unto you if you break it. It is solemn ; for it is a part of that word by which Jesus will judge us at the last

day ; therefore if you are tempted to trifle with it, remember you must be judged by it. It is reasonable ; “ for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness ? and what communion hath light with darkness ? ” Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost ; but the body of an unbeliever, however moral, or amiable, or lovely, is the temple of Satan, who is preferred and served in preference to God. You are a member of the body of Christ, but every unconverted person is a member of the body of Satan. You are alive to God,—every unregenerate person is dead in trespasses and sins. In a word, you are influenced by different spirits, are walking in directly opposite roads, observe contrary rules, and serve two opposite masters. “ How can two walk together except they be agreed ? ” They cannot with comfort, propriety, or as mutual helps.

The consequences of mixed marriages are generally fearful : the unconverted partner becomes more hardened in sin ; the converted becomes carnalized and debased ; the family affairs cannot be conducted upon strictly Christian principles ; the children cannot be trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ; there can be no family religion, though there may be a degree of the form of it ; and the cause of God must suffer by it. If therefore you have any regard for the authority of God, if any concern to please the Lord Jesus Christ, if any fear of

grieving the Holy Spirit of God, if any desire to maintain and increase your own spirituality, if any wish to be approved and commended at the judgment of the great day,—if you would not be cruel to the soul of the unconverted person, if you would not sow the seeds of sorrow, perplexity, and distress, if you would not make bitter work for repentance, observe carefully and to the letter, this law of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and when tempted to run counter to it, say, with holy Joseph, “ How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ? ”

THE WISE CONCLUSION.

"We ought to obey God rather than men."
Acts v. 29.

JEHOVAH, as our glorious Creator and benevolent Preserver, has a right to command whatever He pleases, and to require of us obedience to His commands. But such is the wisdom, holiness, and benevolence of His nature, that He cannot command anything trifling, impure, or unkind; wisdom, holiness, and kindness, are stamped upon all His requirements; and all His commands are plainly revealed in His word. Whatever mysteries there may be in the doctrines of the gospel, there is no ambiguity about the commands; they are plain, positive, and universally binding. They are sometimes misunderstood, because man is prejudiced; or he is so proud, that he fancies the Most High is such an one as himself, and must therefore command just what he would. If we search the Scriptures in a simple childlike spirit, and pray earnestly for divine teaching, we shall not make many mistakes in reference to the preceptive will of God.

But man is so presumptuous sometimes, that he would set aside God's laws; he sets himself to distinguish between what is essential and what

is non-essential, what he may omit without fear, and what must be observed or there is danger. Yea, he sometimes sets himself above God, and requires his children, or servants, or subjects, to obey him in opposition to God. Thus the High Priest and Jewish council acted ; but the Apostles resisted their impious demand, and said, " We ought to obey God rather than men." Authority, whether it be the authority of a parent, a master, or magistrate, is rarely to be resisted ; but if either, or all, require us to sin against God, they must be resisted, or we peril our own souls. But in such cases we must be sure that God has commanded, and must be able to refer to some plain portion of His holy word, as the rule of our conduct. If we were forbidden to attend the means of grace, or read our Bibles, or honour the Lord by observing His own ordinances, we may justly persevere in what appears the path of duty ; yea, it would be sin to draw back. If God command, I must obey ; if men oppose, I must take up my cross ; if danger is likely to follow, I must commit the keeping of myself unto God, as unto a faithful Creator. Man has no right to require obedience in opposition to God, or before God ; and if he require, we ought not to obey.

The believer's duty is plain, " to obey God." He is not to consult custom, or friends, or feelings ; he is not to dwell too much upon possible consequences ; but he is to ascertain the will of

God, and having ascertained it, he is to do it from the heart, braving the displeasure of men. Men will sometimes oppose God's will, for they are proud and ignorant ; they will forbid their dependants following out the convictions of their consciences, for they have not the fear of God before their eyes ; they will at least gravely advise against leaving the beaten tract, or incurring the displeasure or sneers of others ; but they are not to be our counsellors, any more than our lords. The path of duty is the path of safety. The way of obedience to God is the only happy and honourable way ; and if we suffer because we are Christians, or because as Christians we will obey God, let us "glorify God on this behalf." "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye ; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you : on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified." Man's judgment may be against us, but the judgment of God will correct that of His creatures ; therefore let every one of us commend himself to God in well doing ; and the day will soon arrive, when we shall be commended before angels and men ; and our God will say unto us, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of your Lord."

COUNSEL AND PROMISE

“In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.”—Prov. iii. 6.

THE counsel of the wise should be regarded, especially when it is given under the inspiration of the Spirit of God. It is intended for our good, and cannot be neglected without loss. The Christian's way is often difficult, being contrary to sense ; it is dark and perplexing, so that he knows not which path to choose ; it is all strange, for he has never trodden one foot of it before. But his God is always present with him, is always ready to attend to him, and is willing to direct him. Therefore “in all thy ways acknowledge him.” You are dependent upon Him, and you are His beloved child. You should therefore acknowledge Him by consulting His word, which gives you general rules to be applied to particular cases. By believing His promise, in which He engages to be with you, to help you, to guide you, and to crown you with His blessing. By praying for direction ; God loves to be consulted by us, and we should never purpose, plan, or attempt to go any where without seeking His direction. By watching His hand ; it is not enough to read, believe, and pray ; we must expect God to an-

swer prayer, and look to see His hand working for us, clearing our way, and supporting us in it. By submitting to His will ; His will is not only regulated by wisdom but love ; He only wills our sanctification and salvation, and it is our duty to submit to His pleasure with patience, prayer, and faith. Also by gratitude for favours already received ; all our comforts are from God, to Him we are indebted for all we enjoy, and we should acknowledge the same with grateful praise. The Christian who acknowledges God by consulting His word, believing His promise, praying for direction, watching His hand, submitting to His will, and praising Him for His mercies, will never be allowed to go far astray, or be long left in suspense.

Hence the promise, "He shall direct thy paths." Man cannot direct himself ; this the prophet knew when he cried, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself ; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Jer. x. 23.) "A man's heart deviseth his way ; but the Lord directeth his steps." (Prov. xvi. 10.) "Man's goings are of the Lord ; how can a man then understand his own way ?" (Prov. xx. 21.) Therefore "commit thy way unto the Lord ; trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." For "the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord ; and he delighteth in His way." (Ps xxxviii. 5, 23.) He will preserve you from wrong

paths, He will shine upon the right, or He will lead you step by step, as He hath said ; “ I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.” (Is. xlviii. 17.) And if at any time you feel bewildered, and are uncertain about the way, “ Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.” (Is. xxx. 21.)

When God directs your paths and your ways please Him, you will have peace of mind before Him, you will become increasingly acquainted with Him, and you will feel growing confidence in Him. Therefore see the propriety of this counsel and act upon it, for you are but a child, and are liable to be misled ; God is your Father and your Guide, and He expects you to consult Him ; He is willing to guide you by His counsel, until He receive you to glory. You will not go right unless led ; therefore acknowledge the Lord in all your ways, in the prosperous and adverse, in the plain as well as the difficult. He will guide you and conduct you right, for He says, “ I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not ; I will lead them in paths that they had not known ; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.” (Is. xlii. 16.) If the Lord lead you round, He will bring

you right ; if He take the longest road, you will find it is the safest ; and be at length constrained to say, “ He led me by the right way, that I may go to a city of habitations.”

SAVIOUR, through the desert lead me ;
Without thee I cannot go ;
Thou from cruel bonds hast freed me,
Thou hast laid the tyrant low.
Let thy presence
Cheer me all my journey through.

Through a desert waste and cheerless,
Though my destined journey lie ;
Render'd by thy presence fearless,
I may every foe defy.
Nought shall move me ;
While I see my Saviour nigh.

While I halt (no track discovering,)
Fearful lest I go astray ;
O'er my path thy pillar hovering,
Fire by night and cloud by day,
Shall direct me ;
Thus I shall not miss my way.

Lead me on Almighty Victor,
Scatter every hostile band ;
Be my Guide and my Protector,
Till on Canaan's shores I stand.
Shouts of vict'ry
Then shall fill the promised land.”

THE FOOLISH CHOICE.

“Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow; and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.”
Judges ix. 14, 15.

THIS is the first parable in the word of God, and it is very instructive. It was to the Shechemites, who had anointed a worthless bramble to be king over them; and it is so to many among us who imitate so foolish an example. “All the trees said to the bramble, Come thou and reign over us.” Sinners readily unite in evil; they renounce their allegiance to and dependance upon Jehovah; and unitedly display their folly by putting themselves under the government of some bramble. It may be Satan, who reigns over all the children of disobedience. It may be lust, which rules in all ungodly persons. It may be pleasure, which commands the poor unsettled worldling. It may be worldly cares, which extend an iron sceptre over many men of business. It may be riches, the love of which drowns multitudes in destruction and perdition. It may be honour or the applause of the multitude, which has attracted many into the whirlpool of de-

struction. It may be a proud, haughty, unbending temper, which is as tormenting a bramble as any man can well anoint. These are all base brambles, effects of the curse, and yet they are anointed by many to rule over them. Being under their influence or control is like being under the government of a bramble ; it is base—it is injurious—it is degrading. All who yield to such influence subject themselves to misery, disappointment, and woe.

If the bramble is anointed it will reign. “ If ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust under my shadow.” If I am to be king, honour me as such, let me reign. Trust in me for comfort, security, and peace. And is not this just the conduct of the multitude ? Are they not looking for comfort and security, from their lusts—pleasures—riches—honours—applause—or the indulgence of their tempers and passions : to any thing and every thing rather than the Lord. But as soon may the bramble in nature produce grapes, or the thistle figs, as for any, or the whole of these, to give real comfort, solid peace, or true security. Jesus only can give what we want, and yet very few anoint Him to reign over them.

But if the bramble be anointed it must be trusted, or its subjects be cursed. “ If ye will not honour me, let fire come out of the bramble and consume the cedars of Lebanon.” Be true to

your allegiance, or be consumed. The traitor in any cause is justly condemned. You have made your choice, be true to your profession ; for the strongest must fall if proved guilty. If all the trees anoint the bramble, then the bramble will destroy the cedar, if it prove false : so the lusts, pleasures, or passions we now serve will one day witness against us, and condemn us. Hell will be kindled by the fire that breaks out of our own follies. Reader, see the folly of worldly wisdom : it only leads men to anoint a bramble to reign over them. See the arrogance of forbidden things ; they demand entire subjection, constant fidelity, and full reliance. See the danger of subjecting to any but the Lord ; fire will come forth of them and consume us. Note the consequence of false dependances—destruction : destruction as by fire. Sinner, no one is fit to reign over thee but Jesus. He only has the love, pity, wisdom, wealth, and forbearance necessary : renounce your allegiance to all others, place your entire dependance on Him, and anoint him to reign over you. He reigns in righteousness. He rules in love. His laws are just. His government is wise. His subjects are safe, happy, and honourable.

“ Great God ?—my inward powers renew,
And let me holy be !
Then I among thy saved few,
Shall rise and dwell with Thee.”

USEFUL EMPLOYMENT

“And sitting down, they watched him there.”
—Matt. xxvii. 36.

THE place where they sat was called Golgotha, Calvary, or the place of a skull ; it was a hill or a rising on the north-west side of Jerusalem, and was appropriated to the execution of malefactors. Here sin appeared in its most hideous form, bringing forth a painful, shameful death ; here death triumphed in the most cruel way ; and here man was degraded to the lowest degree. To this spot, the Lamb of God came to be sacrificed ; here the Shepherd appears, to lay down His life for His sheep ; here we see Jesus, saving His people from their sins.

The object is most striking: Jesus is crucified ; dying the death of a Roman slave ; never was such an object seen before. Many had been here executed, but all were criminals. No one ever professed what Jesus did. He said He was the Messiah, the Saviour, the Son of God. No one ever walked so correctly as He, even His judge was obliged to say, “ I find in him no fault at all :” He did justly, loved mercy, and walked humbly with His God. He was condemned, though acknowledged guiltless ; delivered over to a base people, to

die a cruel death, and yet pronounced innocent. How striking His manner, how singular His conduct ! He comforts His mourners, pities His bitterest foes, and even prays for His murderers. He was grossly-misrepresented ; very few took a right view of His character, or spake of Him as He justly deserved. How deeply interesting is this object to every spiritual mind ;—though hanging on a cross, though bleeding, groaning, and dying, He is seen to be Jehovah's equal, His fellow, God by nature. He is man's friend, without whom he must have perished forever, without help, and without hope ; He is Satan's antagonist, engaging him in the nature he had conquered, and overcoming him under the most disadvantageous circumstances ; He is mercy's representative, setting forth its depth, its tenderness, its power, and its constancy ; He is death's destroyer, overcoming it in its own dominions, by enduring it in its most cruel form ; He is making an atonement for sin, offering a sacrifice of expiation, and securing salvation to every humble believer. Every view of Him is wonderful. Every character He sustains is full of interest. Every word He utters is full of meaning. Oh to watch Him, to love Him, and to know that He suffered all for me !

THEY watched Him there. The soldiers watched Him, as a military guard, that no one should comfort or deliver Him. But others watched Him from different motives, and with different

feelings. Our God and His Father watched Him, and saw His patience, His purity, His pity, His filial obedience, His perfect love ; and how exactly He did and suffered all He had engaged to accomplish, all that was written of Him. Angels watched Him ; they had seen Him on His throne and worshipped Him, they had observed Him all the time He had sojourned on earth, but they never watched Him with such thoughts, such feelings, such wonder as now. Devils watched Him ; and strove and fought, and tried their utmost to overcome Him ; and surely they must have wondered at His constancy and love. Mary, John, and a few other saints watched Him ; with bleeding hearts, desponding spirits, and souls bewildered with confusion, they stood, and gazed, and wept. Sinners watched Him ; and were the only spectators who remained unaffected. How hard is the heart of man ! How stubborn, how unfeeling ! They watched Him there, but did not relent. *Sitting down*, they observed His writhing frame ; they watched His death-stricken countenance ; they marked His quivering lips, and His dying sentences ; they saw His eye-lids close, His head sink on His bosom, and knew the vital spark had fled. They watched Him, and saw the treatment he received, and the spirit He manifested ;—let us join them, let us sit on the brow of Calvary, and watch Him there. Friend, does guilt oppress or alarm you ? Sit down and see

Jesus die the just for the unjust ; see Him offer a sacrifice for thy sins, and make an atonement for thy guilt ; He dies in thy stead, and procures for thee pardon, peace, and everlasting life. Are you suffering ? Go to Golgotha, and see thy Saviour suffer. Behold and see, was ever sorrow like unto His sorrow ? Watch Him, and see with what patience, fortitude, and deep submission, He drains the bitter cup ; He extracts the curse from all thy afflictions, and only leaves behind what is medicinal and useful. Are you happy ? Sit down and see what thy comforts cost. If Jesus had not suffered you had not been comforted. All thy comforts, joys, and bright beamy prospects, are the effects of His agonies, bloody sweat, and dying groans. Never forget, in thy happiest moments, the sorrows of thy Saviour, nor thy vast obligations to Him. Are you at leisure ? Sit down and watch Jesus, in His last, His dying hours. You cannot spend your leisure moments more profitably, or more consistently. Watch Him, and wonder ; wonder at His love, at the effects of sin, and at His amazing attachment to thee. Watch Him, and believe ; could He possibly give greater proof of the truth of His promises, the tenderness of His compassion, and the power of His grace ? What could He do more to deserve your confidence, gain your credit, or banish your unbelieving doubts ? Watch Him, and praise ; praise His dear name, commend His

finished work, speak of His amazing love. Watch Him, and consecrate thyself entirely to His service ; devote body, soul, time, talents, ALL to His glory and praise, in time and for evermore.

“Tis the most bless'd and needful part,
To have in Christ a share,
And to commit our way and heart
Unto His faithful care ;
This done, our steps are safe and sure,
Our heart's desires are render'd pure,
Nought from His gracious hand can rend
Which leads us to the end.

Nought in this world affords true rest
But Christ's atoning blood,
This purifies the guilty breast
And reconciles to God.
Hence flows unfeigned love to Him,
Who came lost sinners to redeem ;
And Christ our Saviour will appear,
Daily to us more near.

My only joy and comfort here
Is Jesus' death and blood,
Faith with this passport can appear
Before the throne of God.
Admitted to the realms of bliss
I then shall see Him as He is,
Where countless pardon'd sinners meet
Adoring at His feet.”

A SOLEMN DEMAND.

“What wilt thou say when He shall punish thee?”—Jer. xiii. 21.

GOD has threatened to punish sinners, every sinner who lives and dies in unbelief: and His threatenings are *written* in His word, that we may read them; they are *published* by His ministers, that we may hear them; they are often *repeated*, that we may not forget them; and some of them are *fulfilled* in this world, that we may believe and fear them. No unbelieving, impenitent, careless sinner shall escape; the whole of the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. Every one will be punished *justly*, in exact proportion to the nature and number of his sins; *universally*, in every part of body and soul; *fearfully*, without any mixture of mercy; and *eternally* without cessation or end. The threatenings of God are backed, and sustained by His omnipotent power; by His unchangeable purpose; by His impartial justice; by His terrible holiness; and by His solemn oath. They cannot be more sure, nor can they be more terrible. Sinner, they are all pointed at thee; they mean *you*. They speak of snares, of fire and brimstone, of a never-dying worm, of a lake

of fire, of blackness and darkness, of gnashing of teeth, and of eternal separation from God. *Evil is before you.* You are warned of it, and invited to escape from it; but if you do not, "what will you say when He shall punish thee?"

Can you plead ignorance, and say that you did not know that sin and punishment are connected—that God had solemnly threatened such as you in His word? You cannot; you have been warned, and *now* you are warned again, you are warned in time, that you may be safe and happy in eternity. Can you say that you never heard of a way of escape? No, for Jesus has been set before you, and you have been invited and exhorted to flee to Him and find safety. Can you say, that you did not think God would be true to His word? This were to insult Him to His face, and to tell Him plainly that you thought Him just such an one as thyself. Will you say you intended to repent; but Satan deceived you? This will but be an acknowledgment, that you gave more heed to Satan than to God. But what *will* you say? What *can* you say? Suppose you were this moment summoned to appear before God, and He was to put the question, "Sinner, what have you to say, what reason can you assign that I should not punish thee, as I have threatened in my word?" would you not be speechless?

Consider the importance of being prepared

with an answer, against the time when it shall be demanded. Seriously think over the matter. Prepare your answer quickly, and endeavour to prepare such a one as will satisfy your conscience ; as will be likely to ease your torment ; as will confound Satan when he accuses you ; and appease the wrath of God. Can you find such a one ? If not, there is but one alternative ; you must make up your mind to suffer the torments of quenchless flames for ever—or, flee to the Lord Jesus Christ for life and salvation. He is the only way of escape, there is salvation in no other. There is pardon in His blood. There is mercy at His throne. There is pity in His heart. There is veracity in His word. There is hope for thee. Flee to Him, and you are safe. Reject Him, persevere in sin, prefer the world ; and you must for ever be lashed by an accusing conscience, be tormented by a cruel and remorseless devil, be punished by a just and holy God, and condemn thyself throughout eternity. What will you say to this ? Can you say it is not just ? You will be convinced it is. Can you harden yourself in sorrow ? Suffering will increase with every attempt. Will you flee ? Ah, whither can you flee ! All existences will be opposed to you, and armed against you ; while every alleviation of your sufferings will flee away for ever.

THE WISE CHOICE.

"Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."—Luke x. 42.

EVEN saints do not always choose wisely, but Mary did: we often manifest our folly in our preference: but she displayed her wisdom. She chose to sit at the feet of Jesus as an humble learner; she loved His person, admired His preaching, desired to learn His doctrine, and above all to imbibe His spirit. Her object was communion with Him, in which we become conformed unto His image: she preferred fellowship with Jesus, to all anxious concern about entertaining Him as her guest: she preferred this to the commendations and praises of her visitors and friends: and in her preference she discovered great spirituality of mind; true wisdom and discernment; attachment to her Lord and His doctrine; deadness to the world and its vain formalities; a concern for the present welfare of her own soul; and a willingness to renounce all for Jesus. Happy Mary! Honourable woman! Be thou my pattern! Thy choice was wise; thy part was a worthy portion; and thy example is held up for our imitation.

How many choose what they cannot keep, and prefer what they must part with. Many things

we must lose, others we may. A good name and reputation may be sullied by the breath of slander, or stolen by the unmerciful tale-bearer: if we possess it, we are not sure that we shall retain it. The esteem and honour of friends, is a lovely flower; but the frost of adversity may nip it; or the scorching heat of persecution may destroy it. Our prospects in life may be attractive, as the May-day morning; but the thunder-cloud of bereavement may overshadow it; and the dispensations of a wise and holy Providence may entirely change it. Our gifts and abilities, which please us and profit others, may be removed by fevers, the paralyzing stroke, or the judgments of an offended God. Yea, our temporal and spiritual comforts may all be removed from us, if we choose and prefer them to Mary's portion. But a place at the feet of Jesus, an interest in His love, fellowship with Him—if these are preferred, they can never be taken away.

If grace bring us in humility to the Saviour's feet; if we really enjoy communion with Him more than the fleeting pleasures of time; if an interest in the blessings of the glorious gospel is once realized; if love to Jesus once reign in the heart; if the promise pleaded is acknowledged at the throne; if hope, blooming with immortality, spring up in the soul; and if faith lay hold of the Redeemer's love, power, and atoning blood; we have a portion of which we cannot be deprived,

Hell may oppose, but we shall prevail. Earth may persecute, but we shall overcome. Trials may press, but our strength will be equal to our day. At the feet of Jesus we are safe ; no enemy can overcome us there. At the feet of Jesus we are holy ; no sin can gain dominion there. At the feet of Jesus we are happy ; no trouble can be too much for us there. My soul, choose Mary's place, and Mary's portion. There is a place at the feet of Jesus for thee ; the good part may be obtained and enjoyed by thee ; and once obtained, thy Lord will not allow thee to be deprived of it. Reader, there is a place also for thee. You may sit by the side of Mary. Your sin is no obstacle in the way, for Jesus will pardon that ; your unworthiness is no barrier, for it is the worthless sinner's place. Oh, come to Jesus now : take thy place at His feet now : sit down as one who intends to remain : listen to His sweet voice, receive His holy doctrines, taste His precious love, rest your soul on His atoning blood ; and heaven will immediately begin.

“ Lord, teach me this one thing to choose,
Which they who gain can never lose ;
Sufficient in itself alone,
And needful were the world our own.

Let grovelling hearts the world admire
Thy love is all that I require !
Gladly I may the rest resign,
If the one needful thing be mine !”

THE ALARM-BELL.

“ I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot, I would thou wert either cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”
—Rev. iii. 15, 16.

HERE is a solemn charge: “ *Thou art neither cold nor hot.*” We profess the latter—to have the fire of love burning in our bosoms ; and holy zeal boiling in our hearts. We profess to possess and be influenced by the most pure and powerful principles. To be like Jesus, whose meat was to do His Father’s will, and who could say, “ Zeal for thine house hath eaten me up.” We are not quite the former, or altogether cold. It cannot be said there is no concern, no attention, no interest manifested. We are not altogether careless and hardened. We are charged with the intermediate, “ *Thou art lukewarm.*” Thou art at ease, instead of labouring in the Lord’s vineyard, fighting the Lord’s battles, and carrying out the Lord’s commands. Resting on the bed of sloth, instead of fighting the good fight of faith. Thou art *formal*, instead of being full of life, vigour, and the power of godliness. Thou art *presuming*, instead of attending to the admonition which

says, "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." And the command, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Fire is wanting. Holy determination, and diligence in the Lord's cause, are lacking. "Thou art lukewarm."

Here is a satisfactory proof of the truth of the change, "*I know thy works.*" Jesus knows not only your profession, but our works. He observes not only our hearts, but our conduct. He expects not only a sound creed and a scriptural profession, but fruit, "much fruit," fruit that will "remain," "fruit that will abound to our account." He knows all our works, their nature, number, and tendency. He knows them intimately, perfectly. Works are a proof of our state, and we should take them as such, for Jesus does. "Faith without works is dead, being alone." Profession without faith, is profession without principle; and professing faith without works answerable thereunto, is hypocrisy. "Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works."

Here is a serious wish. "*I would thou wert either cold or hot.*" The Lord hates indecision. The Saviour declares that those who are not decidedly for Him, are against Him. He condemns half-heartedness in His cause. He desires that all who profess Him should honour Him.

He prefers coldness to lukewarmness in religion. Here we are taught that a little religion is a very bad thing ; we had better have none, than be satisfied with a little. Christ would rather have no servants, than cool, calculating, worldly ones ; He loves to see His people throw their whole hearts into His cause, burning with love to His name, and boiling with zeal for His glory.

Here is a conditional sentence. " So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, *I will spue thee out of my mouth.*" That is, without repentance, as the following verses shew. Jesus as the Intercessor takes up our names into His mouth, and even for the fruitless fig-tree pleads for a time, saying, " Let it alone, this year also." But if it remain fruitless, He says, " Now cut it down." So with the lukewarm, He may bear long with them ; but He will reject them at last. He will reject them and their services, as loathsome and disgusting. He has cast away many lukewarm churches, until their places could not be found ; and He has cast away many lukewarm professors, and they have been gathered up, cast into the fire and burned. And as sure as His name is JEALOUS, as certain as he hates lukewarmness, He will cast away every cool professor with loathing and disgust. Many who are now considered respectable professors, whose external conduct is decent, and whose attendance on the means of grace is tolerable regular, will

be rejected and disowned by Him at last. Why? They are not HOT. There is no fire, no zeal, no self-denial, no determined efforts for the promotion of the Lord's glory, or for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause. Professor, examine, are you lukewarm? If so, "look to it, for evil is before you;" and no common evil, the Lord Jesus will disown you, refuse you, reject you as vile, loathsome, and abominable in His sight. Surely, many professors have cause to tremble. Surely, some of our churches must be in a dangerous case. "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord." See the need of repentance, for *professors to repent*, lukewarm professors especially. Jesus says, "Be zealous therefore, and repent." "I rebuke thee in the way of chastening, be zealous therefore, in the way of repentance." See the importance of a revival of religion in our churches, and in all our hearts Oh, to keep at a distance from the danger against which we are warned

"Hear Jesus speak, as one of old,
'I know thee, thy profession's vain!
Since thou art neither hot nor cold,
I'll cast thee from me with disdain.

Yet while I thus rebuke, I love,
My message is in mercy sent,
That thou mayest my compassion prove,
I can forgive, if thou repent.'"

FEAR PRODUCED.

“When I consider, I am afraid of Him.”—
Job. xxiii. 15.

THOUGHTLESS sinners are often fearless persons ; and to many nothing is so painful as reflection. If they would be easy, they must not think ; or at least they must not think upon serious subjects. Yet we must all come to reflection ; if we escape it here, it will be said to us in another place, *“Son, remember.”*

But what is it produces this fear of God ? When I consider His law as holy, just, and good ; when I view it as extending to my motives, thoughts, words, and actions ; and compare my general conduct with it, *“I am afraid,”* for I see that I have not kept His precepts, nor even aimed to keep them. So when I consider the infinite purity of his nature, that he does, must, and will eternally hate and reject every thing that is stained with moral defilement ; and know that my nature is dreadfully depraved, that my heart is a sink, a fountain, an ocean of pollution, *“I am afraid of Him.”* Also, when I consider his omnipotence, and know that it will be employed in punishing sin throughout eternity, and contrast it with my weakness, the very thought of being crushed by His power makes me *“afraid of Him.”*

So if I consider that his eye follows me, searches me, and penetrates my very being, the thought that my heart is desperately wicked, and my life a course of sin, makes me "afraid of Him." When I read the threatenings of His holy word, so numerous, so dreadful, and yet so just ; and consider that I am absolutely at His disposal, and cannot fly out of His hand, "I am afraid of Him." But especially when I consider his wrath, as revealed against sin, and as displayed in the destruction of the old world, in the overthrow of Sodom and Gemorrah, in the punishment of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and particularly as seen in the sufferings and death of His own Son, as the substitute of sinners, and think of my deserts, "I am afraid of Him."

I am afraid of being called to His righteous bar, of standing naked before Him in judgment, of being judged according to my works. I am afraid He will not have mercy upon me, pardon my sins, and save me with an everlasting salvation. My fear is painful, it hardens me, and "I would fain fly out of His hand." Is this your case, Reader? If so, let me direct you to a remedy for this fear.

Look at the Lord as revealed in Jesus ; then His terror will not make you afraid, nor His power, law, or justice, terrify you. Here He is love. Here He is light. Amiable, lovely, benevolent. God is in Christ, reconciling the world

unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. *Hear* Him in the Gospel. Here He invites you to approach Him, promises you a full pardon, and presents to you a righteousness answerable to all the claims of His law and the demands of His justice. *Obey* Him at once. He bids you come ; approach Him. He commands you to believe ; confide in Him. He waits to be gracious ; approach and be blessed. *Use* the name of Jesus as warranted. Plead it for all you want. Wear it as your choicest ornament. Trust in it, as your ground of acceptance with a holy God. *Aim* to please God in all things. He is easily pleased. If there be only a willing mind it is accepted, according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not. *Walk* close with Him. He loves your company. He asks you to keep near Him. "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your steps." *Keep your eye* on the Day's-man. Jesus is the Mediator. He stands between God and every coming sinner. He presents his blood and obedience to the Father for your acceptance ; and takes your poor, broken, sinful prayers, and cleanses, arranges, perfumes, and so presents them to the Most High. This is the remedy of all slavish fear ; and thus acting, instead of saying, "When I consider, I am afraid of Him," you will say, "When I consider, I love Him, I bless Him, I rejoice in Him."

FEAR PROHIBITED

“Fear not, I will help thee.”—Isaiah xli. 13.

SAINTS are the subjects of fear, and they often fear most who have the least reason. But our heavenly Father forbids our fears, and our gracious Saviour says, “Be not afraid, only believe.” Slavish fear dishonours God, by reflecting on His kindness, care, or veracity; for if He is infinitely kind, if He careth for us, if His word of promise is true, what can a believer have to fear? It not only dishonours God, but it weakens the soul; and this is manifest in all our exercises of faith, hope, and love. It also encourages Satan, who takes advantage of our fears to distress us, fills our minds with confusion, and our souls with gloom. It unfits us for duty; we can neither do nor suffer the will of God as we should, if our souls are tormented with gloomy fears. In a word, slavish fear reflects on religion, stumbles the world, and is entirely groundless; springing only from ignorance or unbelief.

Our God says, “Fear not, I will help thee.” Who is this that promises to help us? The omnipotent Jehovah, who has all things in heaven, earth, and hell, at His command, and under His control. But will He really help us in every

trial, difficulty, and want? He will. And you may not only draw this conclusion from His promise here set before you, but from His relation to you. You are His *own*, His children, His chosen, His beloved; the tenderness of a Father's heart, the love of a bridegroom's bosom, as well as the faithfulness of a God, assure you that He will help you. His very nature, which is love; His promise, which is truth; and His relation, which is the closest possible; combine to assure you that he will help you. Also your dependance, the result of His wisdom, appeals to Him; you can say with David, "I will cry unto God Most High, unto God that performeth all things for me." You have also an Intercessor constantly before the throne, who never takes His eye off you, changes in His love to you, or ceases to plead for you. And your God can get glory by helping you.

"Fear not," therefore, "He will help you;" and help you speedily, effectually, frequently, quite from earth to heaven. Perhaps a widow's eye may rest upon this page:—"Fear not," thy God will help thee. "Thy Maker is thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is His name; and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth shall He be called;" and He saith, "Let thy widows trust in me." Reader, art thou poor and friendless? "Fear not," look to Jesus, call upon thy God, He will help thee.

In Him "the fatherless findeth mercy." By Him, the poor and oppressed are regarded with pity and compassion, and He will not suffer them to appeal to Him in vain. Art thou weak and sickly? "Fear not," He will strengthen thee, He will make thy bed in thy sickness, He will, in answer to thy prayers, glorify His grace and goodness in thee. If God is thy Father, if Jesus is thy Friend, thou hast no real ground for fear; He will be with thee in trouble, He will deliver thee and honour thee, He will set thee on high, because thou hast known His name. Fear nothing but, sin. Fear no one but God; nor Him with a slavish fear: except thou art living in sin, and art a stranger to His grace and salvation. The fears of a believer can never be justified, nor should they for one moment be encouraged; confidence honours God, conquers Satan, overcomes difficulties, and fills the bosom of a believer with joy and peace. "Rest," therefore, "in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him."

"On everlasting arms I lean;
These only can sustain my hope;
These have till now my refuge been,
And these, through life, shall hold me up

I can look forward, now, with joy,
Though in myself a feeble worm;
For Jesus will His power employ,
And save my soul in every storm"

THE GOOD MAN SAFE

"The Lord shut him in."—Gen. vii. 16.

NOAH was a remarkable person. He is called a just man ; by faith he was interested in Jesus, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. In this righteousness he was justified, accepted, and admitted to fellowship with God. He was a perfect man, for he was sincere in his attachment to truth, in his profession of godliness, and in his endeavour to approve himself to God. He walked with God ; there was an intimacy and friendship subsisting between God and his soul. He was like-minded with God, and they walked together as friends, in sweet converse and enjoyment. He found grace in the sight of the Lord, who approved of him, shewed him favour, and distinguished him from all around him. He also preached righteousness, the righteousness which God required of man, and the righteousness which God had provided for man ; and by his ministry and conduct he condemned the world, and obtained witness that he was righteous.

He is said to be in a remarkable place. The ark was prepared for him, to preserve him and his family from the fearful judgment which was coming upon the world. It was necessary, for

destruction rode in triumph over the whole face of the earth. God contrived it, gave all the directions respecting it, superintended its erection, and rendered it a suitable dwelling place. It contained provision, and it afforded protection and repose. It was open to receive him, when the sentence of God's wrath was about to be executed; and he was invited to enter it. He was not told to go into the ark, but as though the Lord had taken possession of it before him, He kindly said, "COME, thou and all thy house into the ark." God was with him there, and in the presence of his God he found contentment, protection, and joy. When the Lord called he obeyed; and with all his family he entered the ark, "and the Lord shut him in."

Here was a remarkable action. "The Lord shut him in" to secure him, and now no water could pass the threshold, no wave could burst the door; it was close and secure. It was to quiet him and still his fears; he was now shut in with God, and he could not fear. It was to distinguish him. Grace always distinguishes its objects. Noah and his family were now distinct and distinguishable from the whole world, the one within, the other shut out. The good man safe, all beside in danger.

But there will be another deluge, not of water, but of fire. "For the heavens and the earth, which are now, are kept in store, reserved unto

fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men. The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (2 Pet. iii. 7—10.) There is prepared against that deluge another ark, which is the Lord Jesus Christ, and all true believers will be *saved in Him*, as Noah was in the ark of old. He is now presented to us as the ark was to Noah and his family; the door is open, wide open, and God invites us to come in. Reader, you are invited to enter into Christ; you will be welcomed in, there is room, there is plenty of provision, there is safety, repose, and joy. The door which is now open, will soon be shut; and when once shut, it is shut for ever. Then within all are safe; without, nothing but danger, despair, and death. The true believer is *now* in Christ, and in Christ he is safe; God has shut him in, and every absolute promise, the oaths and faithfulness of God, are as so many locks and bolts to secure and keep him safe: and when the fiery deluge is about to take place, the cloud of safety will be seen hovering over our world, and Jesus seated on it; and then, as Noah was taken into the ark, so will every Christian be "caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air," and, in safety, view the destruction of the guilty world;

and “so be for ever with the Lord.” Reader, are you in Christ? If so, you are like Noah; you are a just man, sincere before God and man; you walk with God, you find favour in His sight, you publish righteousness, and by your life and conversation you condemn the world. All God’s Noahs do, and only such are in the ark. Are you aware of your danger? Do you desire to be safe? Then fly to Jesus—hasten to Him at once—delay not—He calls you, and is waiting to receive you.

BELOVED, YET SICK.

‘ Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick.’—
John xi. 3.

SICKNESS is one of the effects of sin, but it is not always a proof of God’s displeasure ; the objects of His love are a poor and an afflicted people. Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth. The objects of His love may be known. They are peculiar in their experience ; they fear sin ; they have low views of themselves ; they prize the throne of grace ; they highly value God’s word ; they love, cleave to, and depend entirely on Jesus for acceptance with God, and complete salvation. They pant after holiness, they pine for the presence of God, and they prefer any thing to being banished from Him. They are singular in their practice, they separate from the world, they are much in private with God, they have no relish for the gaities and vanities of the town, and they wish and aim to copy the example of the Lord Jesus Christ in all things. They say by their life, pursuits, and profession, “ I am the Lord’s.” The love of Jesus weans them from the world, and preserves them from inordinately loving the creature. The Saviour loves all such. His love has been fixed on them from eternity

His love to them is strong, tender, and deep. He loves them always, and will love them for ever.

But the love of Jesus does not prevent sickness ; nay, sometimes it sends it. Lazarus was beloved, but Lazarus was sick. Bodily disease is often sent as a blessing ; it is medicine to purge out some gross humours from the soul ; to wean us more from the world ; to embitter sin ; and to bring us to feel more than ever our dependance on the Lord. It is sometimes sent as a correction : we have perhaps been ungrateful for our health ; or we have been light, trifling, and worldly ; or we have over-valued the things of time, and practically slighted the things of God ; or we have been hewing us out broken cisterns ; or we have been careful and troubled about many things, to the neglect of the one thing needful ; and sickness is intended to chasten, correct, and cure us. Or it may be sent for instruction : we often learn more during a short illness, than we do in months and years of health. Then we see the real emptiness of the world, the vanity of the creature, the folly of seeking a portion below, the importance of divine things, the value of an interest in Jesus, the blessedness of fellowship with God, and the necessity of being like servants waiting for the Lord. Then we get nearer to our God, become more detached from the world, and enjoy divine things with a double relish. Surely this is love. Does the mother love her

child the less, because she sees it necessary to give it bitter medicine? Or, does a father love his son less, because he must chastise him to prevent his ruin? Or, is it unkind to teach a pupil the most valuable and important lessons, even if it require confinement and close application for a time? If so, Jesus is unkind in sending sickness; but instead thereof, it is love and kindness that afflicts us.

But when saints are sick, Jesus should be sought; and to Him the application should be made. He is our physician, and He alone can give skill to the earthly physician, or render the means effectual. He is also one of the family; He is "THE BROTHER BORN FOR ADVERSITY;" now He is especially needed, now He is peculiarly suitable, and now He is willing to visit and bless. He is the friend who is as one's own soul, who is united to us, and deeply interested in our everlasting welfare. He requires that we visit Him, inform Him, invite Him to our sick chambers, and strive to profit by the dispensation. In making application we should plead with Him on the ground of His love. "He whom THOU LOVEST is sick." Then it is important that our state be decided before sickness comes: also that our walk and communications in health should be consistent and spiritual, that our friends may thus plead for us. The sisters knew that Jesus loved Lazarus, and that Lazarus loved Him. But

how many sisters there are who do love Jesus themselves, but their brothers do not ; they cannot go to Jesus for them in sickness as these sisters did. Oh happy family where sisters and brothers all love Jesus, and are beloved of Him. If sickness visits such a house, with confidence may the other branches apply to the Saviour, and love will listen, approve, and act for the benefit of its objects.

THE KIND ASSURANCE

“ I will not leave you comfortless ; I will come to you.”—John xiv. 18.

THE disciples of Jesus were troubled because He was about to leave them ; they felt like children about to be bereaved of a kind, affectionate, judicious parent ; they were afraid, but He comforts them with this kind promise, “ I will not leave you orphans, I will come unto you.” The promise was not intended only for them, but for all who should believe on Him through their word. It belongs to every believer. Reader, are you a Christian ? If so, it belongs to you as much as to Peter, James, or John. Through the knowledge of Jesus is given unto us, exceeding great and precious promises.

We often look forward, and fear that we shall be left as orphans, or comfortless ; this is natural, because we are depraved and have an unbelieving heart ; but it is quite unscriptural ; our heavenly Father cannot forsake us, for His word is faithful ; our dear Saviour cannot leave us comfortless, His love is too tender, and His sympathy too deep. He will come to us, He must be with His people, He cannot fulfil His offices without, He cannot satisfy His loving heart without From

eternity He was looking forward with holy desire for the opportunity ; and now He has it, He will not neglect it.

Our comforts are the gifts of Jesus. Our spiritual comforts flow from His presence, prove His love, and are the fulfilment of His promise. We often grieve Him by our unbelief and hardness of heart, and so forfeit our comforts ; but though they are withheld for a time, He will restore them again, when repentance and faith are exercised anew.

My brother, view Jesus as the source of all comfort to His people ; He is the consolation of Israel. His presence fills us with joy and peace. If He hide His face we are troubled ; if He smile and speak a cheering word we are happy and all is well. His presence and His comforts generally go together, but He is sometimes present to support, lead, and guide us, when He does not see good to comfort us. Yea, He sometimes comes to reprove us, and He is more especially present when we are humbled for sin, grieve over our folly, and mourn on account of having dishonoured His name. He withholds the light of His countenance sometimes to prevent sin, or instruct us in some important truth. There are some things which we cannot well learn while He manifests Himself and fills us with joy ; as our own weakness, absolute dependence, and the value of His presence. But however dark our frame, or gloomy

our experience may be at any time, we may calculate upon returning comfort with certainty, for He will visit us again and our hearts shall rejoice. He will not leave us comfortless, He will come to us.

The promise is plain, exceedingly so ; it is in full force, and means now just what it did when Jesus gave it : and He is the same, as tender, as loving, as full of pity as He was when about to leave His disciples and go unto His Father. This should be firmly believed, for whatever may change, Jesus or His word cannot possibly change ; it should be pleaded at His throne, in darkness, sorrow, or distress ; we should plead with Him to remember and make good this sweet promise of His grace ; it should be firmly trusted, for though heaven and earth may pass away, this word of Jesus shall never pass away. The Lord's children never can be orphans ; their Father lives, and while He lives He loves ; and while He loves, He will never leave them, nor forsake them. Their home remains, they are travelling to it ; and though they may be exposed to storms, and be tried by rough roads while below, their home, and the presence of Jesus there, will infinitely more than make up for all. Their hope is imperishable, produced by the Holy Spirit, founded on the oath and promise of an unchangeable God, fixed upon revealed realities, supported by Christ formed within them ; it is immortal ; it may be

tried, but destroyed it cannot be ; it will outlive every trial, outride every storm, and conduct its possessor to the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Jesus also will visit us during our journey, and at the end come and receive us unto Himself.

“Come ye, who know the Saviour’s love,
And His indulgent mercies prove ;
In cheerful songs His praise express,
For He’ll not leave you comfortless.

He ever acts the Saviour’s part,
With strong compassion in His heart ;
The least and weakest saint He’ll bless,
Nor will He leave us comfortless.

His wisdom, goodness, power, and care,
We largely, sweetly, daily share ;
He will our every fear suppress,
Nor will He leave us comfortless.

When we at last shall meet above,
In the blest world of joy and love,
Our raptured songs will then express,
He has not left us comfortless.

Thanks to Thy name, our dearest Lord,
For ev’ry promise in Thy word ;
But, oh ! with this our hearts impress,
‘I will not leave you comfortless.’ ”

HAPPY AS THE DAY.

“In thy name shall they rejoice all the day.”—
Ps lxxxix. 16.

THE believer has all the elements of misery in his nature, and he is often surrounded by the most trying circumstances ; yet he has a source of joy, which is sufficient to enable him to rejoice all the day long. He may be happy every day, and all the day. He should rejoice, but not as the world does in health, wealth, wisdom, skill, strength, station, or worldly prospects ; but in the name of his God. The name of God reveals His nature, His purposes, and the provision He has made for His people ; it was proclaimed to Moses, (Exod. xxxiv.) it is embodied in Jesus, and it assures the Christian of all he can need, and should be the object of his glory and joy.

The name of God assures us of pardon, full, free, and immutable ; a daily pardon, a pardon of all sin, for a part of His name is “forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.” Here every word that is used for the evils of the heart, and the improprieties of the life, in the holy Scriptures, is introduced, to show that all manner of sin is forgiven. That God pardons daily the sins of the heart, the sins of the tongue, and the sins of the

life ; may we not well rejoice all the day in the name of our God, which forbids fear, generates confidence, and promises pardon. No one feels himself so unworthy as the real Christian ; and he has a growing sense of unworthiness which would weigh him down, but his God says, “ I AM GRACIOUS.” Grace looks for nothing in its objects, but takes advantage of the creature’s unworthiness to glorify itself ; and this part of the divine name assures the believer of acceptance with God, and of a standing before him as a beloved child in Jesus. For base and unworthy as we are, we are accepted in “ THE BELOVED,” to the praise of His glorious grace. A believer has often a vivid and heart-affecting view of his daily infirmities, and sees so much in his own spirit, temper, disposition, and conduct which must be most offensive in the sight of God, that he is occasionally tempted to think that God will cast him away from His presence, and take His Holy Spirit from him ; but the name of his God is “ THE LONG-SUFFERING.” Swift to shew mercy, slow to manifest wrath, displaying infinite patience, forbearance, and grace.

Not only so, but the name of God assures him of pity in weakness and affliction, of supply in poverty and want, and of comfort in distress and sorrow ; for his God is “ THE MERCIFUL.” Mercy will pity and sympathize with misery ; until it relieve and deliver. Mercy is laid up for future

wants, and kept against the day of need; for He keepeth mercy for thousands. Every promise shall be made good, and every promised blessing shall be given as required, for Jehovah is "ABUNDANT IN TRUTH." His word is the word of veracity, and will be fulfilled to the very letter. It may be seen by-and-bye, that God has often gone beyond His promise, but it will not be seen that He ever came short of it. If then Jehovah is the gracious, the merciful, the long-suffering; if He keeps mercy for thousands, forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin; if He is abundant in goodness and truth; and if His name is to be illustrated and glorified, in dealing with His people, may they not well rejoice in it all the day long? It gives a warrant to faith, hope, and prayer, and secures the believer always. (Is. xlviii. 9, 11; Ps. xx. 5; Ezek. xx. 9, 14, 22, 44.)

The consistent Christian rejoices in God's name as containing all he needs, and as preventing all he fears. He rejoices in it in private and in public; in prosperity and in trial. His joy is holy and humble; it is abiding and sweet. Reader, a believer has always cause for joy, and the cause of his joy is always the same: and it is his duty as well as his privilege to rejoice in the name of his God. The unhappiness of Christians often arises from their ignorance of God's name, or from the working of unbelief, which leads them to fancy that it will not be illustrated in their experience.

Believer, do you know God's name? If so, rejoice in it, spread the knowledge of it, and let all see that it is the source of your sweetest joy

“Thou hidden source of calm repose ;
Thou all sufficient love divine ;
My help and refuge from my foes,
Secure I am, if thou art mine :
And, lo ! from sin, and grief, and shame,
I hide me, Jesus, in Thy name.

Thy mighty name salvation is,
And keeps my happy soul above ;
Comfort it brings, and power, and peace,
And joy, and everlasting love ;
To me, with Thy dear name, are given,
Pardon, and holiness, and heaven.

Jesus, my all in all Thou art,
My rest in toil,—my ease in pain ;
The balm to heal my broken heart,
In war my peace,—in loss my gain,
My smile beneath the tyrant's frown,
In shame my glory, and my crown

In want, my plentiful supply ;
In weakness, my almighty pow'r ;
In bonds, my perfect liberty ;
My light, in Satan's darkest hour ;
In grief my joy, and sea of love ;
My life in death, my heaven above.”

CONDESCENSION DESPISED.

“ All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.”—
Rom. x. 21.

How wonderful the patience and long-suffering of God. He might destroy sinners in a moment with the greatest ease ; but He “ is slow to anger and of great kindness.” He stands in the posture of a pleader, stretching forth His hands as though earnestly pleading with sinners. This shows His readiness to be reconciled unto us, though we have been determined, insolent, and hardened enemies. He is willing to receive us to favour, and treat us as dear friends ; yea, as beloved children. He desires to bestow upon us all the blessings of His grace, the fruits of redemption, and the proofs of His love. His arm is stretched out to assist us ; to protect us ; to assure us, that He will not reject. He stretches out His hand and reasons with men, He asks, “ Why will ye die ? ” He invites, “ Come and let us reason together.” He entreats, “ Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, so iniquity shall not be your ruin.” He sends His servants, and by them He beseeches us to be reconciled.

urely, then, sinners will be affected, they will

admire His condescension, and come at His call ! No ; He says, “ I hearkened and heard, but they spake not right ; no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done ? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.” (Jer. viii. 6.) “ All day long He stretched forth His hands,” but the people were disobedient and unbelieving. All through the past dispensation, this was the case : and now in the gospel day, it is very much the same. Yet He still says, “ To-day, if ye will hear, harden not your heart.” Sinner, the time is limited, it is but a day : the day is far spent, and is fast wearing away ; but you still have the light, therefore believe in the light, lest the darkness come upon you unawares.

The Jews were “ disobedient ;” beware of imitating their example. God has published an act of grace, called “ *the law of faith* ;” because He therein promises to pardon, justify, sanctify, and save, every one that believeth. “ *The law of liberty* ;” because it proclaims “ liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison unto them that are bound ;” by this law, the blood of Jesus pays the sinner’s debts, His obedience entitles the believer to heaven, and the Holy Spirit is given “ unto all them that obey Him.” “ *The law of the Spirit of life*,” because according to it, life is given, and the Spirit is imparted, to every one who submits to God’s righteousness. “ *The law*

of love," because it flows from the love of God, breathes love to man, and only requires love to be exercised and rule.

The Jews were "a gainsaying people;" they controverted the truth of His word; they contradicted the messengers He sent; they rejected the proposals He made, and despised the mercy He manifested. How base! How awful such conduct! How it sets forth the patience, forbearance, and long suffering of our God; how it shows the hardness, the folly, and the madness of the human heart. My reader, have you not acted thus? Compare yourself with the Jews, your course with theirs, is there not a similarity? Beware, lest if you follow their example you share their doom. The Lord's hand is now stretched out, it is stretched out to you; He beckons you to Him; He calls you from the paths of folly and sin; He invites you to approach Him; and He says, "I will be merciful to your unrighteousness, and your sins and your iniquities I will remember no more."

"Lord, when shall thy salvation
Be known through every land,
And men, in every station,
Obey Thy high command?"

In Thy dear Son believing,
From sin may they be free;
And gospel-grace receiving,
Find life and peace in Thee!"

THE STARTLING DEMAND.

“Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite?”—Job xxii. 5

THE effects of sin are dreadful ; it hardens the heart of man, and provokes the wrath of God. It is rebellion against His authority, pouring contempt on His word, and offering Him insult to His face. Every sin is great, yet there are degrees in sin, as well as numbers of sins. Therefore the inquiry, “Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite?”

Careless sinner, thou sittest under the gospel, and payest an outward respect to the Lord’s day ; yet you slight God’s book ; you despise His solemn warnings ; you disbelieve His plain and awful threatenings ; you make light of His invitations ; you presume on His mercy ; and you perhaps question, yea, provoke His justice ; “is not thy wickedness great, and thine iniquities infinite?” Formal professor, thou art resting in a name, or in the performance of a few duties ; but you neglect the exhortation, “Examine yourself whether you be in the faith ;” you practise imposition upon yourself, by crying “peace, peace, when there is no peace.” You deceive the simple by your fair words and unfelt statements ;

you conclude you are safe, without any good grounds ; you act as though you disbelieved Jehovah's omniscience, omnipresence, and veracity ; you court destruction ; " Is not thy wickedness great, and thine iniquities infinite ?"

Light-minded, licentious professor, you are insulting God's holiness ; you are trifling with the Saviour's blood ; you do despite to the Spirit of grace ; you abuse free and sovereign grace ; you condemn the idea of a judgment to come ; you trifle with eternity, and are two-fold more a child of hell than before you made any profession of christianity. " Is not thy wickedness great, and thine iniquities infinite ?"

Worldly-minded, covetous professor, look at thy conduct. God has promised a supply of temporal things. He has commanded thee to hold the things of time with a loose hand ; because " the time is short." He bids thee be liberal to His cause and His poor ; He directs thee to lay up for thyself treasures in heaven ; He exhorts thee to set thy affections on things above, not on things on the earth ; He assures thee that thou canst not " serve God and mammon ;" He informs thee that covetousness is idolatry ; and yet you " rise early, and late take rest," you grind the poor, withhold from the church, and are far more anxious to increase wealth than spirituality ; to be rich than to be useful ; " Is not thy wickedness great, and thine iniquities infinite ?"

Backslider, look at thy case ; you were once full of light, fired with love, clothed with zeal, and entirely devoted to the cause and glory of God ; now you are dark, lifeless, gloomy, inactive, and feel but little concern for sinners or the glory of God. You are sinning against knowledge—love—engagement—conscience—the law and the gospel. “Is not your wickedness great ? are not your iniquities infinite ?” Dear friends, examine yourselves ; look at the nature and number of your transgressions : see how they are aggravated by the privileges you possess ; they point to heaven like mountains, they spread before you like a river. But do not despond, yield not to despair ; there is a remedy for great wickedness, for infinite iniquities,—“The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.” You are welcome to this remedy, you are welcome to it this moment. Once more you are apprised of it, directed to it, and encouraged to apply for it. Do not slight it, dare not despise it ; it will but aggravate your sin and increase your guilt.

“O sinner, flee the fatal snare,
At once to Jesus Christ repair,
And on His blood rely ;
He still invites, and bids you come,
No longer from His mercy roam,
Believe, and never die.”

THE ALTERNATIVE.

“Or let Him take hold of my strength, that He may make peace with me; and He shall make peace with me.”—Isaiah xxvii. 5.

WE are all, by nature, in opposition to God; His avowed and determined foes. This is written out on our conduct, it is rooted in our hearts. But how wicked to hate a God who is LOVE! How dangerous to be at war with one who is OMNIPOTENT! How dreadful to fight against one whose MERCY IS INFINITE, and whose WRATH IS A CONSUMING FIRE! Yet such is the case; such are our circumstances. And all the fault is on our side, all the blame is attached to us. It was we that went to war with Him: we have persevered in our opposition to Him: and we have insultingly rejected all His overtures for peace. Yet, we are only like briars and thorns before a devouring fire; we are every moment liable to be consumed; there is but a step between us and destruction. We have provoked His wrath, and deserve to feel His indignation.

But must we suffer the due desert of our crime?—is there no possibility of avoiding the dreadful doom? Yes, the Lord proposes an alternative; we must either stand against Him in battle, like

briars and thorns placed before the consuming fire ; or we must take hold of His strength and make peace with Him. He has laid help upon ONE that is mighty ; He has appointed a PEACE-MAKER ; to Him He has entrusted the great work of reconciling sinners ; and He calls Him His Strength. The Strong One. The Mighty God. He appears before us, full of grace and truth ; and His appearance is, as though the Lord stretched out His hand, and in the most alluring accents said, " Come, and be reconciled to me. I will pardon all your sins. I will forget all your crimes. I will take you to me as a people. I will make you my friends. I will treat you as dear children whom I tenderly love. I will rejoice over you to do you good. I will delight in you, and you shall be my sons and daughters. I have made provision for all this in my Son. His life of obedience shall be set against your life of folly ; His sacrifice shall atone for your guilt ; and I will accept you, bless you, and glorify you in Him. I present Him to you, receive Him ; rely on His perfect work, plead His worthy name ; submit yourselves in penitence at my feet, and peace is made ; reconciliation is effected, and I am your God and Friend for ever."

Dear friend, peace with God is most desirable, for without it there can be no true comfort ; no permanent safety ; no salvation. Its importance is infinite. It is essential to usefulness, holiness,

and joy Let us take hold of the Lord's strength ; that is, let us believe in Jesus, repent of sin, and seek Him in prayer, so shall the strength of God be ours ; His power, which is engaged against the obstinate sinner, is on the side of the believer, to befriend and protect him : so shall we make peace with Him, not meritoriously, that is done by the blood of the cross ; but instrumentally, we shall find peace, obtain peace, enjoy peace. The peace of Jesus will be ours. The peace of God will rule in our hearts, and be to us a present heaven. Observe. Peace with God is attainable. But it can only be obtained in God's way, by believing in Jesus. Seeking peace is acceptable to God. Every seeker is encouraged by God. You are reduced to this dilemma ;—you must knowingly, wickedly, and inexcusably maintain war with God, and take the consequences ; or submit to His authority, accept His terms, take hold of His strength, and be at peace with Him.

“ Can you doubt if God is love ?
If to you His pity move ?
Will you not His *word* receive ?
Will you not His oath believe ?

See ! the suff'ring Son appears !
Jesus weeps ; believe His tears !
Mingled with His blood, they cry,
‘ Sinner, turn, why will you die ? ’ ”

THE WONDER.

"Behold, God is my salvation."—Isa. xii. 2.

No one can consistently use this language but an enlightened, sanctified, happy, believer ; and he can. Still it is truly wonderful, and must appear so, if we consider what such a character *was* before he received grace. He may have been grossly immoral, as Manasseh, Mary, or the crucified thief : or he may have been held in by the restraints of education, the influence of society, or the power of God ; but whatever may have marked the outward conduct, the heart was enmity against God, "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." There was not one pure desire, one holy thought, or one feeling of sympathy with God, until it was produced there by the Holy Ghost. And even *now* he feels, and is obliged to confess, that there is an unfathomable depth of depravity in his nature ; that he is ever prone to start aside like a broken bow ; yea, that in himself, that is in his flesh, there dwelleth no good thing. Further, what would he *have been* but for the grace of God ? This is a question which none but God can answer. Look at the vilest, the most debased, the lowest of our race, and it is not unfair to say, "Such he may have been, but for free and sovereign grace."

Let us turn from the person to the fact, "Behold, God is my salvation." Think of the greatness of God, his infinity, immensity, eternity ; "He sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers ; He stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in." Consider His purity, and the extensive requirements of His law ; try to catch a glimpse of His glory ; and you will be filled with wonder at the thought, that God is the salvation of such a worm. For what does it imply, but that God, in all His greatness, purity, and glory, is engaged to deliver a poor, polluted, weak, and erring creature, from all *real evils*, both present, and to come. And then just think of how this deliverance is effected. He takes our nature, and becomes man ; He takes our place, and is poor in this miserable world ; He takes our sins, and becomes a curse ; He suffers our desert, and dies on a shameful cross. How wonderful ! How calculated to fill us with astonishment and love ; God, becomes man ; the author of heaven, appears as a creature on earth ; the fountain of purity, bows beneath a weight of sin ; and the source and centre of happiness, is the man of sorrows, the bleeding surety, the dying friend of His foes. "Behold, God is my salvation." He *would* save, but no one *could* save for Him ; His own arm must bring salvation, His own obedience must furnish a

righteousness, His own blood a ransom, and His own death an atonement. Surprising! O the depth! Behold, and wonder! Behold, and admire! Behold and adore! Behold, and seek an interest in this great salvation! Behold, and take encouragement; if He saves *such* sinners, whom *can* he not save? If He save *such*, whom *will* He not save? Through eternity it will be a matter of wonder, and a subject of praise, that God should be our salvation. If God be our salvation, are we not safe? If God be our salvation, should we not be happy? If God hath done so much for us, and is become salvation to us, will He withhold any good thing from us?

“ I will praise Thee ev’ry day,
Now thine anger’s turned away;
Comfortable thoughts arise
From the bleeding sacrifice.

Here amid the gospel field,
Wells of free salvation yield
Streams of life, a plenteous store,
And my soul shall thirst no more.

Jesus is become at length
My salvation and my strength;
And His praises shall prolong,
While I live, my pleasant song.

Praise ye, then, His glorious name,
Publish His exalted fame!
Still His worth your praise exceeds:
Excellent are all His deeds.”

THE EFFECT OF FREEDOM.

"I will trust, and not be afraid."—Isaiah xii. 2.

No one can trust in God, until he knows God, and enjoys something of the liberty of the gospel. Until he knows that His anger is turned away, that Jesus has made peace, that we are accepted in the Beloved, we cannot consistently use this language. It is a purpose arising out of the enjoyment of a great and precious privilege; if God is our salvation, and we know it, and enjoy it, then indeed, we may say, "I will trust, and not be afraid."

Such a believer will trust in God's gracious word, which informs him of what God is, what He has provided for His people, what He has pledged Himself to give them and to do for them; and which is His warrant to expect every good thing which he may need. He will trust in the wealth of God, his unbounded resources, which in Jesus are made over to us; to supply our wants, dissipate our fears, and fill us with joy and peace. The riches of mercy, the riches of grace, and the riches of glory, in Jesus and through Jesus are ours. He will trust in the love of God, which is the source of every blessing, the fountain of life, light, and happiness; which is infinitely tender, constant, and fruitful. "I will

trust," says the happy Christian, for God hath spoken ; God is gloriously rich ; God is pure, infinite, eternal love. There is no cause for doubting, or ground for fear ; my eternal interests are secured, and the wants of time provided for. I have the fullest security, a basis for unbounded confidence. The covenant ordered in all things and sure ; the many exceeding great and precious promises ; the solemn oath of God ; the precious blood of Jesus ; and the character of Jehovah Himself ; all combine to bid me "trust and not be afraid." What, though Providence may frown ; though God may delay to answer my prayers ; though circumstances may unite to perplex and try me ; though the Lord may hide His face from me ; speak against me for my sin ; yea, though He slay me, yet may I trust in Him ! His word cannot be broken, His oath cannot be violated, the blood of Jesus cannot be dishonoured, nor can the character of my God be sullied ! "I will therefore trust."

"I will not be afraid." What should I fear ? Poverty ?—it is an appointment of infinite wisdom and love, it was the chosen lot of Jesus, and blessed are the poor. What shall I fear ? Dangers ?—when I pass through the waters, my God will be with me, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow me ; when I pass through the fire I shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon me. What shall I fear ? Satan ?—

God shall bruise Satan under my feet shortly. What shall I fear? Death?—Jesus hath abolished death; and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel; saints do not die, they only sleep in Jesus. What shall I fear? That God will change and reject me, and leave me to the wrath to come?—the mountains may depart and the hills be removed; but His kindness shall not depart from me, neither shall the covenant of His peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on me.

“I will not be afraid.” My God is for me. My God is with me. My God surrounds me. My God dwells in me. My God is every thing to me. Am I weak? My God is my strength. Am I exposed? My God is my defence and the Rock of my refuge. Am I poor? My God is my wealth, and is pledged to supply all my needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Have I all the elements of misery and wretchedness in my fallen and depraved nature? My God is my happiness, my song, and my salvation; in Him I have enough to make me happy in the most trying circumstances, and to fill me with joy and peace in the midst of afflictions and troubles. “I will trust and not be afraid,” for I have enough to make me confident and happy; and though it is difficult to exercise confidence at all times, it is not impossible. I will then look to my God for confidence, as well as for salvation

THE MOURNFUL COMPLAINT.

"The Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me."—Lam. i. 16.

THE Holy Spirit is the appointed and recognised Comforter of the church of God ; it is His work to bring home and apply the consolations of the gospel. For this work He is peculiarly fitted. He has infinite wisdom to solve all our difficulties and doubts. He has power to animate and cheer the soul. He has love and tenderness to sympathise and bear with our manners. He is omnipresent, and therefore we are always under His eye. He is the supreme God, one with the Father and the Son ; the object of love, trust, and worship.

It is His work, in the economy of redemption, to *relieve* the soul from guilt and darkness, which is done by bringing home and applying the atonement ; from doubt and fear, which is by unfolding and applying the promises ; from every species of bondage, by revealing the perfect work of Christ, and the paternal character of God. He often relieves the soul by assisting in prayer ; by strengthening our faith ; by speaking peace through the blood of Jesus ; and by leading us to recline on the bosom of divine faithfulness. He brings back the soul from all its wanderings, by afflictions, &c His work within and leads into

the paths of peace, liberty, and obedience. The saints of old had realized and obeyed the power and peaceful operations of the Spirit; but now they cry, "The Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me."

We are not strangers to this experience; few ever enjoyed the presence of the Spirit, but they had to mourn His absence. He at such times withholds his help in prayer, and then it is but a dry duty; we feel no nearness to God; no sweet drawing out of the soul; no fervour; no taking hold of the promise and pleading it in confidence; no delightful fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. All is dry and barren. The closet is a dull place; and the soul is ready to cry out of the duty, "What a weariness is it." The very gift of prayer seems diminished, while the grace appears quite gone. He refuses His presence in ordinances, and then there are no sweet glimpses of Jesus; no tastes of divine love; no sealing of the word on the heart; but all is lifeless, tedious, and dull. He denies His teaching when we read the word, and then the holy book appears stripped of its value, importance, and beauty; we read without interest, profit, or enjoyment. It is like attempting to read in the dark, or to feed when there is no appetite. He leaves us to suffer as though alone, and then there is no light arising in the darkness, no cheering hope in the gloom; no bright pros-

pect opening in the distance ; but all is dreary dark, and painful. Now we learn by bitter experience our dependance on the Holy Spirit, and our need of His presence, assistance, and love.

The Comforter withdraws on account of sin. It grieves Him : it pains Him at His heart. It is a defiling His temple, a quenching His influences, a grieving His love : He loves the believer but He hates and will reprove his sin. There is no relief or consolation in His absence. No one can supply His place. If He departs, our comfort is gone : our strength is gone ; and we have only the lifeless form of godliness left. It is our mercy that He never entirely departs, though He retires to a distance : He never finally leaves, though He may suspend his comforting influences for a long time. Dear friend, is it so, that our comfort, peace and prosperity depend thus on the Holy Spirit ? Then how careful we should be not to grieve Him : how anxious we should be to please Him ; and we should constantly remember that though our comforts flow from the Father, who is the God of all comfort ; and come to us through the Son, who is the consolation of Israel ; yet they can only be directed into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

“ Should we indulge one secret sin,
Or disregard His laws,—
His succours and support, within,
The Spirit, vex'd, withdraws.”

THE RESOURCE.

"The Lord is my helper."—Heb. xiii. 6.

CREATURES sometimes would help us, but they cannot ; and sometimes they could, but they will not. Yet the Christian need not be discouraged ; he has a Friend who *can*, and is always *willing* to help him : it is his God—this is his RESOURCE. He may be disappointed by others ; but this is allowed, in order to lead him to trust only in his God. Beloved, our God loves to help us Himself. It is His delight to do us good. He is pleased to see us coming to Him for assistance, or for grace. or for His blessing ; especially if we come in a filial spirit, as children to a Father. He asks our confidence, and approves of our dependance upon His faithfulness and word. Therefore He says to us, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee ; be not dismayed, for I am thy God ; I will help thee, I will strengthen thee ; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." "I will never leave thee, I will never, no never, no never, forsake thee." So that we may boldly say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

Help is sure to be needed, for we have many difficulties to overcome, many foes to conquer,

many trials to endure, many duties to perform, and many privileges to enjoy. But not one of them can be attended to in a proper spirit, or be prosecuted with success, without divine help. We have openly to profess Christ, and honourably to maintain our profession. We have to mortify sin, cultivate holiness, live above the world, exercise patience, and labour for God: but such is our ignorance, and such is our weakness, that unless we are assisted by divine wisdom and strengthened by divine power, we shall fail in every point. But if God be our helper, if we daily feel our dependance on Him, and if we live upon Him for all we want, we shall know, as the Apostle did, that we can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth us.

The Lord will help the poor, the needy, the afflicted; indeed, every one who, believing His word, desires His help, and pleads for it at His throne in the name of Jesus. His strength is made perfect in weakness. "He is the strength of the poor." He is our *helper*, and a very *present* help in time of trouble. Always near us, but especially then. He is a powerful, an omnipotent helper; He has heaven, earth, and hell at His command. It is nothing for Him to help. He can work deliverance by the weakest and meanest instruments; and often does, in order to confound the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. He is

a wise and judicious helper, and affords His assistance in such a way as to hide pride from men ; exercise the faith of His people ; try the sincerity of those who profess to rely upon Him ; and keep His saints humble at His footstool. He equally displays His grace, wisdom, and power in the help He affords, the supplies He sends, and the deliverances He works.

Believer, see what you have to expect ! You will be tried. You will feel your own weakness. You will learn more and more your need of divine help. Yea, you will be brought to see that only the Lord can afford you the help you need : that you want a HELPER who is infinite in wisdom, omnipotent in power, and whose grace is immutable and free. See to whom you are to look for help in every duty, trial or conflict ; to the Lord, to the Lord always, for all you need, and to Him alone. See what you are to do : believe His word, plead at His throne, and prove Him faithful and true. See how you should plan,—“ if the Lord will :” how you should purpose,—“ I will go in the strength of the Lord :” in what you may triumph,—“ The Lord is my helper.”

“ Our lot in future years,
Unable to foresee,
Our Saviour, to prevent our fears,
Says, Leave it all to me ”

THE ALL-SUFFICIENT ONE.

“I am the Almighty God: walk before me, and be thou perfect.”—Gen. xvii. 1.

ABRAHAM was now grown old ; he had known the Lord for many years ; he had endured many trials, but many more lay before him ; and the Lord appears to his aged servant, and reveals Himself as “THE ALL-SUFFICIENT ONE.” This was to comfort him amidst all the infirmities of age, and to cheer him in the winter of life. The God who had always sustained, directed, and comforted him, now manifests peculiar sympathy and tender love. Aged believers should especially mark the kindness of the Lord, and look to Him for sympathy and grace in the decline of life. The title was intended to strengthen the faith of Abraham ; he had wavered, the Lord intended to try his faith yet more ; a promise was given, but every thing appeared to oppose its fulfilment ; yet the all-sufficiency of God was to be the stay and support of his faith. “Is any thing too hard for the Lord ?” Look at His wisdom, it is infinite ! Look at His power, it is omnipotent ! He is the all-sufficient. It may have been intended to be placed in opposition to the foes he may meet, the weakness he may feel, the fears that may arise,

the wants he may experience ; what are all these, if God is with us, if God is for us, if the all-sufficient One is our God ? God may delay, faith may be tried, fears may arise, foes may oppose, temptations may assail, wants may increase, weakness may be painful, the infirmities of age may gather around us ; but God is all-sufficient ; and he bids us look to Him, trust in Him, and walk with Him.

“ Walk before me.” That is, walk, exercising faith in my promise, placing your dependance on my faithfulness ; and yielding hearty obedience to my precepts. Walk before me as a servant in the presence of his master, realize that my eye is upon you, that I am interested in you, and am engaged to provide for you. Walk before me as a child under the eye of his father,—a father who loves him, observes him, cares for him, and delights to shew favours unto him ; a father who is teaching him, who will correct him ; but who will never cease to love him. Walk before me as a friend who is under my protection ; you are my friend if you do whatsoever I command you ; I am your friend, and will shew myself friendly ; I will commune with you, I will counsel you, and I will make all my goodness pass before you. Walk before me as an expectant, looking for the blessings I have promised ; and expecting me to be all I have said, and to do all I have promised. Expect me to be faithful to my word, kind to my

child, and true to my character. Walk before me, copying my example, that you may be a pattern to others. Be holy, for I am holy. Be perfect or sincere, for I am sincere.

“Be thou perfect,” that is, sincere, or upright ; sincere in heart, upright in life. Abraham had failed in this point, when he denied his wife ; he had been reprovèd and corrected for it ; and now he is reminded and admonished. The Lord will remind His people of their sins, and warn them against a repetition of the same. He is also encouraged ; it is as if the Lord had said, “Abraham, I am all-sufficient to preserve thee in every place, to protect thee from every foe, to guide thee in every path ; therefore, never give way to duplicity, be always sincere and upright. Fear no one. Be false to no one. Be upright always, and in all things. A believer never can have any reason to practice deception, or yield to slavish fear ;—his God is with him ; his God is engaged to defend and provide for him ; his God will never leave him nor forsake him. Christian, see what is the character of thy God : he is Almighty, and will you fear ? He is all-sufficient, and will you give way to gloomy foreboding ? See what He requires of you : that you walk before Him, as always beneath His eye, in His presence, and under His gracious protection ; that you be sincere, open, upright ; be just what you profess to be. Be an honest man, if you are not a fault-

less man. Your God hates deception. He abhors trickery. He will punish hypocrisy. Let your life be the faithful index of your heart; say just what you mean, and do what you say. Hate the appearance of a lie, in all the shapes it wears.

“My God!—in that dear name what glories dwell!

Yes, my Redeemer gives Himself to me!

How great the gift, archangels cannot tell!

How rich the portion, and the grant how free!

Whate’er He is Himself, to me He gives;

His power and wisdom, truth and grace, are
mine!

All that I have or hope my soul derives

From the full fountain of His love divine!

His boundless grace shall all my need supply,

When streams of creature comfort cease to flow;

And should He some inferior good deny,

’Tis but a greater blessing to bestow.

Let then no rival my affections share,

No meaner passion ever dare intrude;

For oh! what earthly object can compare

With Him, the source of all created good?

When with His smiles my soul he deigns to bless,

Nor cares nor crosses can my peace destroy;

Possessing all things if I Him possess,

Enjoying all things if I Him enjoy.

Then be His love my never-failing theme.

Source of my joy, and subject of my song;

That when I close life’s transitory dream,

Eternal ages may the bliss prolong.”

THE PAST REVIEWED.

“Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness.”—Deut. viii. 2.

It is well sometimes to look *forward*, and anticipate “the blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour.” It is good sometimes to look *within*, and examine whether we be in the faith. It is right sometimes to look *around*, and see the posture of our foes, and what temptations are laid for us. It is necessary also to look *back*, and see the way the Lord our God hath led us.

Where have we been? In a wilderness. For sin has changed the character of the present world; it was once the garden of the Lord; it is now a desolate wilderness. Its leading characteristic is barrenness. There is no food for the soul, nothing to satisfy the immortal spirits in it. He that knew most, possessed most, and enjoyed most of this world, has said, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” It is a dangerous place, full of robbers, wild beasts, and terrible pits. It is full of troubles, and all who dwell in it are exposed to many, great, and painful privations.

Who has been our Guide? The Lord thy God

hath led thee. He well knows the place, with all its turnings, windings, and dangers. He tenderly loves our persons ; His love has in it more than a mother's tenderness, and more than a father's constancy and strength. He always consults our welfare. He does not always aim to please or gratify us ; But He always guides us into safety, peace, and honour. He leads us according to our nature and circumstances : for Israel He provided the cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, to refresh, preserve, and lead them ; but He leads us by His sacred Word, His Holy Spirit, and the events of His Providence.

By what way have we been led ? Not by the nearest, or the smoothest, or the easiest, but the best. *The right way. The only right way.* It has been rough, difficult, and round about ; but it has been right. God chose it for us, and He has led us in it. It was the way in which He could teach us the most important lessons ; try and exercise all our graces ; prove the sincerity of our professions ; prepare us for His service below, and His glory above ; and make us really useful, that He might make us honourable. For only the useful are honourable in the kingdom of our God.

How long has He been leading us ? Israel had been led forty years,—so has the writer,—so, perhaps, has the reader ; this is a long period, more than half of man's allotted time below. It

is the most interesting period ; for in these years we have been called by grace, separated from the world, consecrated to God, sent into His vineyard, and formed into families. It is also the most important period. Few are converted after they are forty years of age. Generally, the Lord's people are called young. In the past forty years our state has been changed, our nature renewed, our character formed, and our usefulness evident.

What now does the Lord require ? "Thou shalt remember all the way the Lord thy God hath led thee." This implies we should notice, record, and preserve an account of the Lord's dealings and leadings. Remember *the way* ; *all the way* ; the occurrences of the way ; that you were led, not dragged, not driven, not carried, but led ; your leader was not a tyrant, but a God, a friend, a father ; you were led, not left to chance ; led every moment, every step, in every place, even when you least perceived it. The Lord's leading has preserved you, and but for that you had not arrived so far in safety. Remember your *faults*, how many, how great, how various ; how you have provoked the Lord, and grieved His Holy Spirit. (Deut. ix. 7, &c.) Remember His *favours*, how rich, how free, how suitable ; you were a slave, a rebel, a condemned criminal ; he ransomed you, reclaimed you, pardoned you, and raised you to freedom, dignity, and happiness (Deut. v. 15.) Remember your *foes*, how they

hated you, pursued you, fought against you, and were determined to destroy you ; but your God delivered you. (Deut. xxv. 17, 18 : Micah vi. 5.) Remember the *friendship* of your God, how necessary, how constant, how condescending. Friendship unparalelled, on which your supply, your safety, your all depended. (Deut. xxxii. 7—14.) Remember the way, the Guide, and your own conduct, or you cannot be just ; you will not be either grateful or humble. Remember, for God remembers. (Jer. ii. 2.)

Can I forget the wond'rous ways
By which thou hast thy servant led
Through a long lonely wilderness !
How strangely kept, how strangely fed !
Tempted and proved by hopes and fears,
I roved for many tedious years.

Provoked, thou didst not quite depart,
But farther yet the spirit tried ;
And show'd the evil of my heart,
The stubbornness, deceit, and pride,
My depth of unbelief to prove,
And groan beneath thy humbling love.

Thy love's design I now perceive ;
Me to myself that love hath shown ;
Justly thou didst thy servant leave,
To come again and claim thy own ;
To save, when all my griefs were past,
And do me endless good at last."

AN ANSWER REQUIRED.

“Now advise, and see what answer I shall return to Him that sent me.”—2 Samuel xxiv. 13

THE Gospel is a message sent from God to man ; it is sent to every one of us ; it tells us “God is love ;” that in love He sent His only begotten Son into the world to die the just for the unjust ; that He has found a ransom, accepted an atonement, and is now just in justifying every sinner that believes in Jesus. He assures us that He has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, that He waits to be gracious, and is willing to receive every one that comes to Him for mercy and salvation. He beseeches you to be reconciled. He asks for your hearts. He presents to you a free and full salvation, without money and without price. He exhorts you to seek His face, and gives you His word that He will in no wise cast you out. It is a message of mercy. It is an invitation to a feast. It is a call to surrender, with a promise of peace, happiness, and honour.

Reader, this message is sent to you. Have you considered it? Have you accepted it? Have you acted upon it? The Lord expects an answer to His message, an answer from you. Surely you will return Him an answer ; and it ought to be a prompt answer. Can there be any

need for hesitation?—do you want time to decide whether you will be happy, or miserable, for ever? Can it be necessary to take time to consider whether you will accept His mercy, or expose yourself to all the vials of His wrath? The answer must be plain. You must receive or reject. You must give up your heart to God, or say, “I will not have Him to reign over me.” You must decide; and you will say by your conduct, if you do not in so many words, either, “I will be saved by Jesus,” or, “I will perish in my sins.” Let it be an honest answer: if you will not yield yourself unto God, say so, say so honestly; but do not say with the Pharisees, “*I go, sir,*” while you only act the hypocrite. If you will not be reconciled, if you are neither ashamed nor afraid to be the enemy of God, be honest enough to say so, for remember, He knoweth your heart; it is impossible to deceive Him. Give such an answer to the gospel message *now*, as you will not wish to reverse on your dying pillow, or be ashamed to hear published at the day of judgment before assembled worlds.

“Now, therefore, *advise*, and see what answer shall be returned unto the Lord.” Advise with conscience, that monitor within; afford it all the assistance you can, by placing yourself in the light of eternity, and considering the character of God, and then ask, “What answer shall I return?” Advise with the Bible; there you have

truth without error, and light without darkness ; there the past is brought before you, and the future is placed immediately under your eye. Go to the death-bed of the sinner whose conscience is awakened, and who is just about to exchange worlds, and ask him, "What answer shall I return?" Go to the saints of God, who know the bitters and the sweets of religion, who have long been professing Christ, and advise with them as to what answer you shall return.

Yet consider to whom the answer is to be sent, —even to the God who made you, who has hitherto befriended you, who will judge you, and either receive you into His glory or banish you to hell. Bear in mind that you send it as an answer to the kindest message ever mortal received, and a message that involves the most solemn consequences. Do not forget that it will be registered in heaven, and be noticed, yea published, by the Judge of all as your own decision. Think, O think, what may be its effects ! If you return an improper answer, God may give you up to the hardness of your own hearts, and then your eternal ruin is certain. Yet I fear that some who may read this paper will dismiss the subject from their thoughts, and say, "Go thy way for this time ; at present I prefer the world to the church, sin to holiness, Satan to Jesus ; I determine to persevere, at present, and risk the consequences." OH, DO NOT ! DO NOT !

NO EXCUSE.

“ They are without excuse.”—Rom i. 20.

Who are without excuse? The Apostle refers to the heathen, who had only the light of nature; but as the unity, majesty, wisdom, and goodness of God are proclaimed by the works of creation, their worshipping so many, such mean, such foolish, and such cruel deities, was inexcusable. They knew, or they might have known, that there was but one God; and that He was glorious, wise, and good; and they were held responsible for the knowledge they might have obtained; and are condemned for their follies and their crimes. But if heathens, who had only the book of nature, were inexcusable, how much more so are those who have also the Book of inspiration; to whom the gospel is preached, and before whose eyes Jesus Christ, as crucified, is set forth. Reader, you have the Bible, which contains a clear and full revelation of the character of God, and the demands of the law, and the provision of the everlasting gospel. To you the word of salvation is sent; God hath set before you the way of life, and the way of death; if you therefore live in sin and die without hope, you *“ are without excuse.”*

There can be *no excuse for sin*. God has prohibited it in His law ; and he has threatened it with death, even eternal death. He often visits it in this world with evident marks of His displeasure, and He has pledged His character to punish it for ever in those who die impenitent. No one is, or can be, forced to sin ; it must be voluntary, or it is not sin ; if, therefore in opposition to God's prohibition, if, defying His awful threatenings, if, despising the promises of His mercy, men will persevere in sin, are they not "*without excuse*?"

There can be *no excuse for sinners*. God has graciously provided means for our recovery from our fallen state ; He has furnished us with the most powerful motives to flee from the paths of the destroyer, appealing to our hopes and our fears ; He has promised His Holy Spirit to every one who asks for it ; He has pleaded with us, exhorted us, and invited us by His servants ; and He has told us plainly that our destruction is off ourselves : and yet multitudes who hear His word remain unmoved and unaffected ; and from year to year, go on "treasuring up unto themselves wrath, against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God ; who will render to every man according to his deeds."

To such especially we must say, "You are without excuse." To you God has spoken both in justice and in mercy ; to you God has pre-

sented His beloved Son, in the everlasting gospel ; to you God has promised His Holy Spirit upon asking for it ; and to you He has sent His servants to warn, invite, and beseech you to be reconciled unto Him. You have heard His word ; you profess to believe its truth ; you have often felt convinced of sin ; you have purposed and promised to reform, and yet you have violated those purposes and promises ; you prefer sin to holiness ; you mind the things of the flesh ; you dare justice to do its worst ; you resist the Holy Ghost ; you treat mercy with contempt ; and all this on the brink of eternity, with hell flashing before your eyes. What excuse can there be for you ? You approve of sin, you love it, and therefore persevere in it ; you justify the Jews in putting the Son of God to death, for reproving and condemning sin ; you grieve the Holy Spirit of God ; and you are in league with Satan. Who then will attempt to make an excuse for you ? Will conscience ? No, it cannot, for it often reproves and condemns you now. Will saints ? No, not even if nearly related to you by nature, for your conduct appears awful to them. Will angels ? No, they will admire the long-suffering of God toward you, and justify God in your eternal condemnation. Will devils ? No, they will accuse, reproach, and eternally torment you. Will Jesus ? No, He will say, " Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for

the devil and his angels." All will be against you, and join to testify that YOU ARE WITHOUT EXCUSE. Sinner, if you reject the Saviour, if you despise the day of visitation, if you trifle with eternity under the light of the gospel, you will "*receive greater damnation.*"

Salvation is brought near to you in the gospel. It is presented to you as a sovereign remedy for your mental maladies ; do not dash it from you like a maniac, do not treat it with neglect. It is spread before you as a feast, a supper of the great King ; do not refuse the invitation, or begin to make excuse for not sitting down to partake. It is a great salvation ; great beyond expression, great beyond conception. It is vast as our miseries, boundless as our sins, durable as eternity. Look at the price it cost,—the blood of Jesus. Look at the evils it prevents, and the blessings it secures. Look at the happiness it promises, and the glory and honor it confers. Neglect it not. If you do, how will you escape ? (Heb. ii. 3.) You are shut up to the way of life or the way of death ; to salvation by free grace, or damnation as the effect of persevering in sin. Neglect it not. It is the height of folly, it is the basest ingratitude, it argues the greatest stupidity. Remember, you are without excuse. You cannot escape. Would you fly, whither can you fly ? Would you harden yourself in torment, who can harden himself against that God who maketh the

heart soft ? THINK, I beseech you, *think*. BEWARE, oh, beware, lest He take you away with a stroke ! Ask, ask, “ How can my heart endure, or how can my hands be strong in the day that God will deal with me ? ” See that you refuse not Him that speaketh ; for if they escape not, who refused Him when He spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him now He speaketh from heaven. (Heb. xii. 25.) Reader, at parting, allow me to repeat the solemn truth, “ IF YOU PERISH, YOU WILL PERISH WITHOUT EXCUSE.”

“ STOP, poor sinner ! stop, and think,
Before you farther go :
Will you sport upon the brink
Of everlasting woe ?
Once again, I charge you, STOP !
For unless you warning take,
Ere you are aware, you drop
Into the burning lake ! ”

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